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ABSTRACT

A semi-annual refereed publication of research and instructional practices in English/language arts and allied fields, preschool through adult levels, this volume of "Maryland English Journal" presents articles on a variety of subjects and showcases the work of young writers. Articles in volume 29, number 1 are: "Expertise in Tutoring" (Bennett A. Rafoth and Erin K. Murphy); "Reflections on Student Teaching" (Eden Barbely); "The Joys of Supervising a Student Teacher" (Kathryn A. Megyeri); and "Trends and Issues in English Instruction, 1994." Volume 29, number 1 also presents 7 samples of award-winning creative writing by senior citizens, and 17 samples of second- through eighth-grade Maryland students' writing. Contributions in volume 29, number 2 are: "'What Do You Want Me To Do?': A Delayed Answer to a Distracted Student's Question" (Richard M. Johnson); "Where Have All the Women Gone? Gender Issues and the High School Literature Curriculum" (Susan Davis); "Literature without Lectures--A Different Approach" (Craig Etchison); "The Role of Story Schema in the Understanding of James Joyce's 'Araby'" (Marie A. Nigro); "I'm Telling!" (Carol F. Peck); "Confessions of an Ex-Podiophile" (Carol A. Downey); and "A Brief History of MCTELA" (Jennifer L. Klemens). Volume 29, number 2 also presents 18 samples of writing by fourth- through eighth-grade Maryland students. (RS)

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Maryland Council of Teachers of English/Language Arts
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Volume 29, Number 1 Fall 1994

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Manuscripts submitted to ***Maryland English Journal*** must conform to the following standards:

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REVIEW PROCESS

Associate editors review blind submissions, a process that can take up to three months. Accepted manuscripts may need to be edited for clarity, organization, language, or style. Published authors will receive two complimentary copies of the issue in which their submission appears.

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From the Editor's Desk

FROSTBURG
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This issue includes several instances of reflective thinking about teaching as an avenue of professional growth. The first piece, an interview study, aspires to define expertise in tutoring for the benefit of those "involved in the training and supervision of tutors for the classroom or writing center." Two poems by a high school English teacher reflect the trials and tribulations of today's classrooms. Next come companion pieces reflecting on the experiences of student teaching—first from the perspective of the student teacher and then from the perspective of the cooperating teacher—at Sherwood High in Montgomery County. A review of *Teaching English in Middle and Secondary Schools* éxamines the teacher preparation experience from the perspective of the pre-internship work of the English methods classroom.

The tenth annual report of trends and issues in English instruction by the NCTE commissions rounds out this issue's focus on thinking reflectively to enhance what Donald Schon calls professional artistry.

In the tradition of *Foxfire*, in which memories of senior community members were captured in their own words, and as a counterpoint to our regular Maryland Showcase for Young Writers section, this issue of *MEJ* features winning essays in the Allegany County Seventh Annual Senior Citizens' Creative Writing Contest. Allegany County is the only Maryland county to hold such a contest and the annual nature of the event fosters an on-going writers' support network among the group members, many of whom enter each year.

Each of us involved with *MEJ*'s production hope you enjoy this issue. I continue to invite your input and submissions as readers of the *Journal*, and I thank you for your support of this process.

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Maryland English Journal
Volume 29, Number 1

Expertise in Tutoring

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What does it mean to say that a tutor is an *expert*? This is an important question for tutors who aspire to excellence and for the faculty who train them. Expert tutoring can mean Bakhtinian dialogue (Gillam), counseling (Marx), coaching (Clark), surrogate teaching or any number of tactics (see Carino). But the day-to-day practice of tutoring rarely adheres to a single theory or approach. Peer tutors at the high school or college levels mostly just want to help, as they say, mixing some amount of general or theoretical knowledge about the writing process and collaborative learning with the concrete realities of the rough draft that is handed to them. Somewhere in the stretch between theory and the reality is where expert tutors do their work. But beyond this generalization, what can be said about tutor expertise? Anyone who is involved in the training and supervision of tutors for the classroom or writing center struggles to know what makes a good tutor.

In *Educating the Reflective Practitioner*, Donald A. Schon discusses the abilities of practitioners who show competence in unique, uncertain, and "conflicted" situations (22). He calls such ability professional artistry, which he characterizes by the know-how one uses while doing a task and the thinking-about-it-all one does during or after a task. He finds that professional artistry is not traceable to any single theoretical or practical approach and is therefore not easily described in the discipline's more familiar frameworks. Though Schon writes mainly about the fields of architecture, music, and city planning for his illustrations, there are ample parallels to teaching or tutoring writing; and his concept of reflective practice is one we found very suitable for the research conducted for this article.

The goal of the study is to help those who are involved in the training or supervising of peer tutors to see how expert tutors talk about their daily work. We decided to study what the tutors thought and said because we were interested more in hearing their reflections about tutoring than in observing their moment-by-moment activities and because interviews, like oral histories and memoirs, offer some insights which immediate observations

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cannot achieve. In addition, we know from our own experience that the stories and ideas tutors share orally play a big part in their informal training. For this reason, we wanted our research method, interviewing, to resemble the way tutors tend to communicate with one another.

The Study: Purpose and Design

This study focused on expert tutors' reflections on the work they performed and what these reflections could reveal about their expertise. Because we chose to study tutors from around the country, we relied on individual telephone interviews to collect our data. The purpose of the telephone interviews was to elicit responses to questions developed by the authors, based both upon Schon's work and our own knowledge of and experience in writing centers. We were not interested in proving whether or not these tutors really were experts—we accepted the judgments of their supervisors for that—but rather in their reflections, as experts, on the daily work of tutoring. What expert tutors make of the work they do is important for both future theoretical work and for the training and supervision of tutors. We believe our study contributes to these efforts.

Participants. To select tutors for interviewing, we looked for writing centers which had directors and staffs who were active in publications, presentations, or regional or national writing center organizations on the assumption that they were likely to keep their staffs abreast of current issues and concerns. After narrowing the list to include small and large schools and different regions of the country, we asked directors to recommend one tutor who had at least one year's experience and who, in the director's opinion, was among the best tutors on staff. This resulted in 14 tutors at 14 colleges or universities in 10 states across the country. The 14 tutors interviewed had an average of 2.6 years of experience, ranging from seven months to five years with a median level of 2.25 years. Only one tutor had less than 1.5 years of experience.

Questions. After arranging an appointed time, we telephoned tutors and obtained their consent to be audiotaped and quoted in print. The interviewer, the second author, adopted a flexibly structured interview format (Whyte), using a list of questions as a guide:

1. *How have your views about tutoring changed since you first began tutoring?*
2. *Have you had any particularly positive or rewarding experiences in your job? Please tell me about them.*
3. *Have you found that your own writing has changed since you've been a tutor?*
4. *How do you know when a tutoring session is going well?*
5. *What strategies do you use to help students with their writing? What things do you do with your tutees?*

We based the questions on issues and concerns raised by the tutors in our own writing center, as well as on our familiarity with theory and practice in peer tutoring. Schon's emphasis on change and experience led us to formulate the first two questions based on these factors. Our third question grew out of a topic raised often in staff meetings. After several interviews, we added the fourth question when monitoring became an issue of interest as we listened to the tapes and re-read transcripts. While adding a question at this point created a design problem, we felt it was too important to ignore. Finally, the fifth question about strategies seemed to be a "natural": expert tutors should, we reasoned, have a repertoire of strategies to describe to us for helping students.

The interviews were conversational and loosely structured in order to facilitate the kind of openness and thoughtfulness one would expect from experienced tutors. At times, the interviewer would pick up on a point raised by the tutor and pursue it in order to see what else the interviewee might have to say. As Mishler predicts, this yielded some of our most interesting responses. Except for question 4, all five questions were asked of all interviewees. Each interview was transcribed, resulting in a total of 133 single-spaced typed pages.

Analysis and Discussion

We read through each transcript independently and highlighted remarks in which tutors offered rich descriptions, recalled specific experiences, provided reasons for their views, told of familiar as well as novel strategies they used, and shared feelings about values and priorities. In short, we looked for any evidence in the conversations which shed light on the tutors' talents and thoughts about their work. Using the constant comparative method of analysis as described by Glaser and Strauss, we looked for instances in which at least two tutors gave the same or similar responses to a question, and we formed a category for that response. We then looked at a third tutor's reply to the same question and assigned it to the same category or created a new one, and so on, proceeding independently at first and then together.

The resulting comparisons of these categories show similarities and differences, but altogether they indicate that expertise in tutoring is multidimensional and that there is no "core" of special talents shared by all the tutors we interviewed. We discuss this point further in the conclusion.

1. THEN AND NOW — TUTORS' CHANGING VIEWS

Schon observes that experts look back at their earlier shortcomings as a way to improve what they do in the future. When we asked whether their views about tutoring had changed since they first began tutoring, seven of the 14 tutors interviewed answered in ways that emphasized a commitment to nondirectiveness. They repeated terms like "guide" and "nondirective" to characterize their roles. All seven gave detailed replies, contrasting past and present and generally providing more explanation than the others. They explained terms and tried to say why they valued their current views of themselves over those they held initially, such as being a listener now vs. an advice-giver before. As we listened to the tape, we could not help but believe some had already contemplated the question.

One tutor, for example, reflected a new paradigm view in her answer when she said,

> You know, I had a lot of concerns that all of us have, do we know enough? 'I don't know enough about grammar. I don't know enough about writing.' And once I got over that I realized that a lot of what we do is to listen really well and help our peers. Writers have everything inside and the job of a tutor or confidante is to be a good listener and ask the kinds of questions that help raise their consciousness about their feelings.

The other seven tutors gave various brief replies. Two stated that their views had not changed much at all (they also had the least amount of experience in the group). Two mentioned that they were now more conscious and more confident, respectively, about what they said and did. Another observed simply that she was less surprised now than before, and another that she had broader views than before. For example,

> *Interviewer:* When you first began were your views about tutoring different than they are now?
> *Tutor:* They probably broadened.
> *Interviewer:* *(pause)* Mm hmm... In what way?
> *Tutor:* To include more situations that students are in.
> *Interviewer:* *(pause)* OK, do you mean that you get students that are in different situations?
> *Tutor:* *(Pause)* Right....

Tutors who gave short, unsupported answers for this question did not reveal the mental record of changing perspectives that the others did. And for this particular question, they may not have had the same level of self-awareness as the others. Yet it must be emphasized that these tutors were not always so laconic. On other questions they gave detailed responses. This pattern, in which each tutor had much to say in response to some questions and little in response to others, was generally true across all tutors. On the other hand, no questions seemed to be favored more than others.

2. POSITIVE, REWARDING EXPERIENCES

For the second question, we asked tutors to tell us about any positive or rewarding experiences they had had on the job. We found that almost all tutors told of experiences in which they themselves had learned something or had otherwise grown and benefited. Two described experiences in which becoming involved in the content of the assignment was the main reward. They used expressions such as "really got into the topic" and "got really involved in this idea." Others mentioned experiences like creating special mini-lessons for a dyslexic student, visiting the library with a student and helping him learn to use it for the first time, assisting an ESL student and learning about his language and culture, drawing in another tutor for collaborative tutoring, feeling proud upon learning that a student's paper had been published, and successfully testing out a questioning technique. One tutor, however, had no rewarding experience to report, stating simply, "I don't know that there's been one experience because I've only done it for two semesters." It is interesting to note that for most of these tutors a positive, rewarding experience brought to mind times when they became highly involved and both student and tutor benefited from the session. We believe this emphasis on mutual benefit reflects the tutors' notions that working together means learning together. One tutor who shared her experience in working with a nontraditional student explains this idea best:

> The student's main problem was that she lacked confidence in her writing. So I worked with her on two papers, and the first one was difficult because she was so nervous. On the second, she had much more confidence. I think that the nicest thing she said was, 'You gave me confidence, and when I wrote my second paper I wasn't so unsure.'

This recollection indicates that intangible rewards—creating, teaching, working together, and feeling proud—are important to this tutor's job satisfaction. Not surprisingly, these are intangibles often cited by people who truly enjoy their work and who are most likely to do it especially well.

3. CHANGES IN TUTORS' OWN WRITING

All tutors answered "yes" when asked whether their own writing has changed since becoming a tutor, and all but two gave responses which characterized these changes as becoming more conscious or critical of their own writing. Responses of this type tended to emphasize a heightened awareness of audience or readers, the value of sharing writing, using correct grammar, and understanding the writing process. Some tutors mentioned changes in both attitude and behavior, such as "I'm more conscious of myself as I write," and "I discovered writing as a process." One tutor gave an answer that touched on several important issues in writing:

> Well, I think that my writing has changed because I've had to vocalize it, and I've had to tell someone else what my own process is. When I have writer's block, I say, 'OK, back up to what you're telling these other people to do, and go through a good pre-writing.' It's also made me see the value of re-writing and editing.

Two responses noted a change in behavior without mentioning any change in perspective. "Now I use a computer!" and "I use what I preach [now]." Aside from these differences, we were unable to discern additional patterns. Taken as a whole, however, tutors spoke positively about the effects of tutoring on their own writing. They recognized that a conscious and critical awareness of one's own writing process is an integral part of tutoring and that the benefits are mutual between tutor and student. The reflections-on-action which this question brought forth show yet another aspect of expertise—namely, that being a writer creates a base of personal experience from which to give advice.

4. MONITORING

The question "How do you know when a tutoring session is going well?" was asked in only half of the interviews because this topic emerged half way through the interview schedule. As we studied the tapes, we noted that tutors found it easier to talk about what they did than about why they did it. Nonetheless, we felt that *why*-questions were important for uncovering some of the bases of their expertise. We added this question as one way of getting at the underlying reasons for their behaviors.

Four tutors identified the student's talking as the best indicator that a session is successful. One tutor, however, took this a step farther and said that a session is successful when the student can point out the next error. Another tutor mentioned body language, interrupting, and "taking over" (as when the student wants to be in control of the session). "Any sign of ownership, like holding the paper," one interviewee said. In another case, "just asking" was the tutor's preferred direct approach. He said, "I just lean back in my chair and ask, 'Is this helping you any?'"

In general, the most common response to this question was "when the writer talks." All tutors expressed the belief that a successful session was a matter of shared responsibility. A possible exception to this belief came from a tutor who said that he knows a session is going well when the student is prepared, thus attributing the responsibility to the writer.

With regard to the first point, it might appear that some tutors are focused too narrowly on talking, and that dialogue, while it is a sign of student effort and engagement, does not guarantee a successful writing experience. Though there is some research to indicate that talking leads to better writing (Barnes, Rubin and Dodd, Sweigart), what kind of talk is most effective and how soon writing must follow the talk are unanswered questions. For example, one tutor described how she encourages students to write during the tutoring session while she sits quietly until they stop or "get stuck again." Presumably, some students in her sessions might talk very little but write a lot. In any case, shared responsibility (the second point above) would seem to be a vital sign for any tutoring session, and most tutors seemed to recognize this. What is important here, we believe, is that most of the tutors saw themselves as *working with* students to facilitate writing, rather than simply giving advice, diagnosing problems, or correcting errors. We believe this is an essential element of peer tutoring and something which helps to clearly define the role of peer tutors within the institution.

5. STRATEGIES

Upon becoming tutors, most tutors learn the more common ways of helping students with their writing. These include asking leading questions ("What point are you trying to make?" "Can you think of another reason for this?"), inviting the writer to read the paper aloud in order to hear what it sounds like, and helping the writer to make an outline of ideas to better visualize organization. With the expert tutors, we expected repertoires that included not only such basics as these but also more innovative strategies.

Listed below are the more interesting ones we heard, along with the names we gave to them:

- ○ *Ways with White-out*: To correct wordiness, a tutor from Massachusetts covers up portions of the essay with pieces of paper and asks the student to say it again. She then writes down what the student says on another sheet of paper.
- ○ *Scissorhands*: To organize, two tutors from Minnesota and Idaho give students scissors and tape to cut up their papers and reconstruct them in a more orderly fashion.
- ○ *Stenostorm*: To brainstorm, two tutors from Michigan and Massachusetts play "scribe" and "stenographer" by taking notes on what the writer says, leaving the writer with a record of notes to build on.
- ○ *Tell it to the Tape*: To overcome writer's block, a tutor from Kentucky has students speak into a tape recorder and then transcribe the tape, resulting in more words on the page than could ever have been possible otherwise.

The tutors who described these strategies spoke about them in detail and with enthusiasm. They also intimated a willingness to take risks with new ways, confident that if one thing didn't work, they would simply try something else. Much like successful writers, these tutors were not tied to one way of performing a task; instead they were flexible. To begin with, of course, they had a repertoire of strategies to experiment with, something beginning tutors usually do not yet enjoy.

Conclusion

Thinking reflectively is a characteristic of professional artistry. This study tried to record the reflections of expert tutors by asking them to describe how they worked and what they thought about their work. From the interviews, we focused on five areas that shed light on some of the dimensions of tutor expertise.

Three questions showed common patterns. In every case, tutors had more to say in some responses and less in others. When asked about rewarding experiences (question 2), tutors tended to recall those in which they became highly involved and learned something in the process. On the subject of changing views (question 3), tutors focused on changes in their own writing that were the result of their becoming more conscious of the writing process. And with regard to recognizing a successful session (question 4), they pointed mostly to talking by the student.

The fact that many of these tutors considered student talkativeness to be a sign of a successful session is consistent with prevailing attitudes about learning. However, the research does not completely support this view. In a study of writing conference talk, Walker and Elias found that the amount of student talk "is not a key determinant of successful writing conferences." Walker and Elias further concluded that what the conferees talk about—the agenda—is a key determinant (281). This study did not explore how expert tutors develop their agendas, but in light of the research by Walker and Elias this remains an important topic for further research.

Our study suggests two conclusions: First, expertise in tutoring is best understood pluralistically. Each of the tutors had been identified as being among the best by their writing center directors. But despite the patterns noted above, their responses were quite varied and localized. That is, tutors often spoke about their work in the context of their own writing centers and the kinds of students they served. Some spoke about issues in the abstract, but most focused on the concrete realities of their work.

Second, a pluralistic view of tutors' expertise is important for staff training and development. If tutors are to develop professional artistry, they are most likely to do so by cultivating a variety of approaches rather than adopting a single model and by relying on those ways which best suit their own styles and contexts. John Dewey noted that learning "requires candor and sincerity to keep track of failures as well as successes and to estimate the relative degree of success obtained" (312). Tutors who are encouraged to think candidly about their work will, we believe, be in the best position to learn from themselves and from others.

Thinking about one's work and discussing it with others is part of the growth process toward becoming a more talented professional. Those who train and supervise tutors need to encourage their tutors to think reflectively and to communicate their thoughts with others. Among tutors, this can be done in staff meetings or in dialogue journals. If the environment is open and conducive to such communication, it will occur spontaneously in the workplace. According to Lee Shulman, a professional does not only practice a craft but communicates to others the reasons for what he or she practices. This type of communication is not merely informational. It opens the channels for input and feedback that lead tutors to become experts.

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PEOPLE'S SCHOOL #1: Seattle, 1973

(Where have all the flowers gone?)

Malinda Lloyd
Sherwood High School

Each day
They came to the old
School clinging
To the side of the hill,
Broken and rejected:
Some because the law
Required it;
Some because
They wanted to;
Some
For the free lunch.

A shoulder length mushroom-head
Of red hair hid Chris
From view; while
Leslie wore
A long brown wig
To hide
A head shaved
By an angry father.

For attention,
Becky barked like
A dog and crawled
On the floor biting
Ankles;
Mark wore a rabbit-skin
Coat and sold drugs
In the parking lot.

Emancipated from his parents
At fourteen, Jeff lived on
The streets, and Ruthie
Lived at home
To protect her younger
Sister from abuse.

George saw life
As "far out,"
Even when police
Busted him
In class; and before
Tracie OD'd in the hall,
She screamed
Of black butterflies crowding
Her mind.

Flower children
Gone to seed
At fifteen,
Wanting only
Love, and, finding
Little, disappearing
Into the cracks
On the walls.

Chris and Ruthie graduated.
But not before
Seventy-three stitches sewed
Ruthie's face back
Together
Again,
And Chris
Tied back
His
Hair.

Malinda Lloyd teaches Advanced Placement English and eleventh grade Honors Writing Workshop at Sherwood High School in Sandy Spring, Maryland. She is currently finishing a novel and working on a collection of poetry. She will receive her Master's in Writing from The Johns Hopkins University in December 1994.

Twenty-eight Times Three: Reflections of an English Teacher

Malinda Lloyd
Sherwood High School

Occasionally,
A paper flutters to the floor with
Finality.

Should I
Line the bird cage with it?

The black print on the page blues to gray.
My pen slips down the words
Leaving a snail trail.

Eighty-four compositions
On the same subject;
I could correct them with my eyes closed.

My eyelids flutter.
I dream
Of Scantron essays.

Reflections on Student Teaching

Eden Barbely
Benjamin Banneker Junior High School

An individual who returned to her *alma mater* to student teach reflects upon her relationship with her cooperating teacher—the variable the literature says is most crucial to successful student teaching—and details two particularly successful assignments.

Six years ago, I was standing in the football field at Sherwood High School in Sandy Spring, Maryland, during half-time, being crowned homecoming queen. I was a cheerleader, active in sports, and had a lead in the school musical. Since then, I have had dreams about coming back to my old high school; and they came true. Once I was the student, and later, I was the student teacher. It seemed I'd come full circle. Sometimes when I walked around the building, I thought, "There's my old locker," and "That's where I was standing when I found out I had the lead in the musical." But now roles had changed, and I was ready to begin my student teaching career just as the students in my ninth grade classes were beginning their high school careers.

Studies show that student teaching is probably the most significant factor in teacher preparation, that the cooperating teacher (or critic teacher) during that time is the student teacher's "significant other," that anxiety is a major contributing factor in problems encountered by student teachers, and that success in student teaching is most contingent upon the relationship between student teacher and cooperating teacher (Zerr 4). Therefore, I wish to address such issues, to reflect on my own student teaching experience, and to share a unit of study.

On my first day of student teaching, my cooperating teacher, Kathy Megyeri, told me, "We could write a parable for Steinbeck's *The Pearl*, or we could create totems for *I Heard the Owl Call My Name*." Her suggestions stirred up two emotions within me—excitement and terror. Who was I to teach these kids anything? What gave me the right? Could I do this? The way I felt, one would never guess I'd just completed eight weeks of student teaching in a middle school and was now in a high school.

At the first, I thought of them as Kathy's kids. It's funny, though, how the possessiveness grows. Later when I spoke to Kathy in the English office during our planning periods about the students, I'd say, "*My* third period kids are on target, but *my* kids in sixth period need help with punctuation." I felt like I was stepping on toes, and I didn't like that feeling. But I also felt like a real teacher, and I did like that feeling!

Eden Barbely, a graduate of Sherwood High School, returned to her *alma mater* during the fall of 1993 to student teach. She now teaches English and drama at Benjamin Banneker Junior High School.

I'd read that success in student teaching most depends on the relationship between student teacher and cooperating teacher, more in personal support and role development than in skill development. If problems occur, they are usually due to a lack of understanding and flexibility by both parties in their human relations skills. And such problems usually fall into three categories: (1) instructional behaviors, (2) personal characteristics, and (3) classroom management and discipline. Anxiety about evaluation and class control has a significant correlation with pupil disruption. Not surprisingly, such anxiety is related to student teachers' self-concept with different grade levels, ranked in decreasing order from secondary, elementary, early childhood, and pre-school to special education (Zerr 3).

But my student teaching experience was wonderful, probably because I had perfect chemistry with both my cooperating teachers. Kathy, as well as my first cooperating teacher in middle school, was more than any student teacher could ask for. Both my cooperating teachers were experienced teachers; and I, being so very inexperienced, valued their knowledge greatly. Student teachers in Brodbelt and Wall's study indicated that their supervising teacher was the primary source of professional advice; personal friends were second; other student teachers were third; and the college supervisor was the fourth most common choice (18). Student teachers spend more time with their cooperating teachers than with any other college instructor, and, because of the pivotal role that the cooperating teacher plays in both teacher preparation and job placement(Zerr 6), I felt I was extremely lucky.

I also felt I taught my cooperating teachers something. Kathy was surprised to learn that I didn't grade papers with a red pen. I told her I would never grade a student's paper with one. When I handed back her graded assignments, students saw 25 or more red slashes on their papers and wondered if the other students saw that "bloodied" paper as well. Also, red is a more disturbing and aggressive color to the eyes than others. Kathy laughed at me and said she needed to cling to one of the last vestiges of power teachers had, but she respected and understood my reasoning behind the choice, and we each continued to grade in our preferred colors.

Although my cooperating teachers had more knowledge of teaching, I had recently acquired innovative teaching techniques from college. When I first arrived at Sherwood as a student teacher, I observed various teachers "in the act," and I cringed at the rows of seats in their classes, especially since Kathy, too, preferred this arrangement. "Oh, how a full or even semicircle would complement this structured atmosphere," I thought. I also wanted to personalize the lessons and make them more meaningful to the students, and I was allowed the freedom to try my ideas. For example, Kathy's ninth grade writing classes were learning the differences between the friendly letter and the business letter in preparation for the mandated Maryland Functional Writing Test. I suggested that our ninth graders be paired with the junior high students I had instructed prior to this assignment and that each student write a friendly letter to an eighth grader about their impressions of senior high and advice on what adjustments eighth graders would have to make. The letter had to be in proper form and contain, on a second copy given to the teacher, underlined transitions that indicated movement from one thought to the next. The following is an example of such a letter:

Sherwood High School
300 Olney-Sandy Spring Rd.
Sandy Spring, MD 20860
November 17, 1993

Dear Michelle,

I am in the ninth grade at Sherwood High School. Even though you are not going to attend high school for another year, I am writing this letter to share with you some of the differences between middle school and high school. The change from being one of the biggest people in the school to the smallest was a very difficult one to make.

So far, the transition has gone smoothly. Unlike middle school, there are many different sports that you can participate in. I am a wing back and kick returner for the junior varsity football team. We, like players in most sports, have practices in the summer before school and every day after school. You can also play volleyball, soccer, basketball, or almost any other sport you can think of. In middle school, you can join a few clubs. In high school, there are over thirty clubs to join and, if you want, you can even start one of your own. In particular, my favorite club is FBLA, Future Business Leaders of America, because you get to go on a lot of field trips.

Sherwood, like most high schools, is tremendous in size. It can almost be compared to a mall. It is very easy to get lost, but any teacher or student will help you find your way. Eventually, you'll get used to your everyday routine. It took me about two days with a map and teachers' help. The work here is also more difficult. Most people have about two hours worth of written work each night. That doesn't include studying. Also, in middle school, college was just a dream. Now that I'm in high school, it's a reality. You not only have to keep up your grades, but you must write away to different colleges to find out their requirements.

One of the biggest differences is that most classes are mixed. In middle school, you have only eighth graders in your classes. In high school, ninth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth graders are in each class, especially elective classes. Consequently, that is a chance to meet other people. For instance, my band class contains ninth through twelfth graders. At first, I thought that seniors and freshmen wouldn't work well together in the same classes, but it turned out that I was wrong. Boy, am I glad. However, most of my classes are all ninth graders. Lunch is also different. Not only do all four grades eat at the same time (there are three different lunch periods), but you can eat outside if you wish. Sometimes, you might have a big test in the class you have before lunch, and they will probably give you a different lunch period just for that day.

I hope my letter has shed some light on what high school is all about. These next four years seem like they are going to be the best of my life. I look forward to receiving your letter. Feel free to ask me any questions that you have. Have fun in your last year of middle school, but I think you will like high school much better. I know I do.

Yours truly,
(signed)
Jeff Levine

In most instances, our ninth and eighth graders became pen pals, and the freshmen felt they were truly performing a service in giving such "adult" advice to lower classmen.

We followed this assignment with a business letter to a celebrity of their choice requesting an item that we could take to Children's Hospital for the upcoming holiday season, although admittedly the students wanted a duplicate of the item sent to them to keep. Again, we stressed the correct business letter format, use of transitions, the reason for selecting that person, and adequate detail. The assignment was also challenging in that we had to find names of agents and fan club addresses from magazines or the backs of record albums in order to get a response. Fortunately, one of our students' fathers was a lawyer who represented many local celebrities and had access to contacts and addresses. The students were very excited to choose their own celebrity to write to; and, whenever an item arrived, we shared it with the entire ninth grade. We received everything from autographed photos to donated articles of clothing. A sample of one of the celebrity request letters follows:

3514 Cherry Valley Dr.
Olney, Md 20832
November 10, 1993

Mr. Alice Cooper
Renfield Productions
8033 Sunset Blvd.
Suite 745
Los Angeles, CA 90046

Dear Mr. Cooper:

I am a freshman at Sherwood High School in Sandy Spring, Maryland. The reason I am writing to you is to request an autographed picture that will be donated to Children's Hospital in Washington, D. C. If possible, I would like an autographed picture too. Unfortunately, some of the children in the hospital will be in there over the holidays. As a result, our ninth grade English class is writing to people we admire to ask them if they would send to us an artifact, memento, picture, or some item they hold dear so that we can take them to the hospital. We are going to be delivering them close to Christmas time.

I really admire your musical talent. A couple of my friends are really big fans too. There is not one song of yours that I don't like. I have all of your tapes. I was fortunate enough to see you on the David Letterman show last March, and you sang excerpts from past hits of yours. Instances like that endear you to audiences nationwide. You're one of my favorite singers. I hope that you never give up your singing.

I would really appreciate your sending those pictures. It would really mean a lot to one of those children (and me) to receive a personalized autographed photo from Alice Cooper. Thank you for your time, Mr. Cooper.

Sincerely,
(signed)
Christa Johnson

Unfortunately, the response rate was low, probably from a constant barrage of similar requests from fans, and of those who did respond, many of the donated items arrived after the holiday season and even into second semester when the students were enrolled in the literature half of the ninth grade. So the assignment, by then, had lost its punch, but students remembered the letter formats and passed the Maryland Functional Writing Test with the highest scores ever.

As I stated earlier, my student teaching experience was pretty near perfect. As I tried to think of disappointments during the sixteen weeks of teaching both in middle school and in high school, my search was difficult. The negative aspects that stood out were obvious and customary to most student teaching experiences. First, there was the tough transition classroom students had to make adjusting from the "real" teacher to the student teacher. We student teachers want the classes to be "ours"; however, technically, the classes are still "theirs." Fortunately, both my cooperating teachers were very confident in my ability to take over the classes and just let me go for it. Even though on most days after the first two weeks, the cooperating teachers were not physically present, they were still psychologically present; they would be back. Secondly, "The kids like you because you're young and energetic," both my cooperating teachers said. I guess it was mostly true. The students whined a little more as the end of my placement neared. "We want you to stay! You're cool!" they said. Maureen Mahoney, a ninth grader, said, "I think you understand us more because you had to do what we're doing, so you know how we feel."

Mickey Dernar, another ninth grader, added to his evaluation, "You're more like a friend. When we talk, you know why and understand how to stop us without being mean. When we don't feel like concentrating, you know how to get us back on track."

However, I don't think students would react this same way if they were my students full time. And I had to agree with the student teachers' wish-list in the study Zerr conducted (14). I wish there had been time for more conferences with the cooperating teachers and more specific suggestions given. In one study, student teachers said they expected more help from the critic teachers than they received (Ekpunobi 4). At the beginning of the experience, we need to have the role of student teacher and her duties and responsibilities defined, so we feel more secure. And perhaps we need more guidance in child study, classroom management, and teaching techniques. Although we observe so many different teachers' styles, it takes years to develop our own. Time in the classroom to take on more responsibility and have more opportunities to develop our own creativity and initiative are really what most student teachers need to become true professionals.

Each of my classes did something special for me the last day—from cards to doughnuts to pizza. It was a pleasant ending to a satisfying experience. For the second time, I left Sherwood. The first time was as an eighteen year-old graduate of the school system, and the second time was as a twenty-three-year-old graduate of the University of Maryland. I now hold a BA degree in English Education. When I graduated at the end of my student teaching experience, I was extremely excited and proud, but I was also melancholy and nervous. I'd been a student for nineteen years. I'd been in college for five and a half of those nineteen years. Five of those were spent in a college classroom learning, learning, and learning. However, none of the semesters compared to the knowledge I'd acquired those sixteen weeks of student teaching. I learned so much from both of my cooperating teachers, and they were both so extremely helpful that after student-teaching, I got a long-term substitute's position (although it was in physical education), and I directed a middle school's spring play, all avenues to a permanent teaching position.

When a student teacher begins to teach, she is finally able to use the techniques she's worked with so much and for so long in the university classroom. Some of those innovative concepts that I learned and tried out on fellow college students—jigsaw, concept attainment, debate, cooperative learning—really worked on the typical middle/high school student. This is good to know.

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The Joys of Supervising a Student Teacher

Kathryn A. Megyeri
Sherwood High School

A veteran teacher offers her reflections on supervising a student teacher by citing studies that deal with successful cooperating teacher-student teacher relationships. She includes her own reasons for encouraging fellow teachers to take on the responsibilities of mentoring student teachers and provides a recommended grade grid for Barbely's letter writing assignments in the previous article.

When I was a high school student thirty-five years ago, I had little tolerance for my old female teachers with their thick-soled shoes, protruding stomachs, sagging breasts, grey hair, and bifocal glasses. I wondered why they didn't retire and give young teachers that I could identify with a chance to teach and make learning fun. Now, thirty years later and facing retirement, I've become exactly that teacher I used to criticize and laugh at so very long ago. I wear cushiony Easy Spirit orthopedic shoes every working day; my stomach, breasts, and rear not only protrude but sag; my grey hair demands brown dye every three weeks; like a '65 Mustang in for repairs, I've been hospitalized twice this year; and I'm about due for trifocals.

What has forced me to face my own professional mortality each semester this year is that I was assigned two student teachers, both female, both University of Maryland undergraduates, both competent, both in love with English, and both joyful, happy beings committed to teaching today's youth to become even better adults tomorrow.

The irony is that at the same time I feel I've reached my peak professionally, I'm dated. I still prefer whole class instruction to groups; my classroom writing models come from literary classics instead of TV tapes; I still grade papers with a red pen; I'm serious, not fun; and I'm content-oriented instead of student-centered. But I like to think that I am a good mentor; that I share some pretty effective grading techniques with my young colleagues; that some students appreciate my stern demeanor and realize it's my way of wanting to take school as seriously as I believe it should be taken; that even though I've grown tired and old in their eyes, I still love introducing adolescents to good literature, observing their writing mature during a semester in the IBM writing lab, seeing a student's poem in print, watching an enraptured class stare open-mouthed at Zefferelli's *Romeo and Juliet*, and reading a composition written by a trusting teen who admits feeling abandoned and heartbroken the day no one wanted to sit with him at lunch.

Kathy Megyeri, a previous contributor to the *Maryland English Journal*, is a twenty-nine year veteran of the Montgomery County Public Schools. During the last three years, she's been pleased to be assigned student teachers from the University of Maryland.

For years, I was hesitant to accept student teachers. Now, I welcome them whenever the local placement person indicates one is available. What's happened? Perhaps I've outgrown the "tension" most cooperating teachers admit to. One study reveals that cooperating teachers are most anxious about modeling for student teachers, meeting their needs, developing positive interpersonal relationships, setting objectives, implementing assessment measures, and executing the university's requirements (Zerr 7). Perhaps cooperating teacher Mike Pier captured the anxious feelings of all cooperating teachers:

> From the classroom teacher's point of view, my point of view, the tension, I think, resides in 'Here's a person (student teacher) who's judging everything I do;' and because I don't believe I have all the answers, that creates a tension. They're making value judgments about what I'm doing, how I'm teaching, my methods, the concepts I teach, whether or not my curriculum is rigorous enough, whether I'm doing things in a way that they agree with. Do I want to hear from them about the job I'm doing? Do they dare tell me when they disagree with something I'm doing? They're in a very curious position. So there is that tension. The only way I've found to relieve it is to simply approach it in a team sort of method and say, 'I don't have all the answers.'
>
> Mike Pier (Graham 213)

Since the role of the cooperating teacher is one of the most crucial factors in determining the success or failure of the student teaching experience, several major factors are necessary in developing an effective professional relationship between the two: fostering a sense of belonging, setting a cooperative tone, establishing strong lines of communication during the first few days, allowing the student teacher to control the rate at which she progresses into full-time teaching, scheduling a portion of each day for conferences and planning, allowing the student teacher to write her own lesson plans for the activities she teaches, and providing feedback on a regular basis (Baer 11).

The entire student-teaching field experience is often characterized as a "curious position" for both cooperating teacher and student teacher. During the assignment, both are in the transition of accepting new roles and responsibilities, trying to work in a position of uncertainty, questioning power and authority, and attempting to be cooperative to avoid conflict. It's a unique situation when, as Graham puts it, each has to "understand the other's instructional practices, belief systems, modes of thinking, instructional styles, personalities, interests and life experiences while teaching the same students and the prescribed curriculum in a positive learning environment" (214). It's a demanding relationship but it also creates opportunities for real collaboration, "a dynamic which engages and alters both cooperating teacher and student teacher as they explore each other's intentions and reflect upon their shared work and teaching." It becomes "joint work" that leads to sustained professional growth and change (213).

Add to that the demands of university supervisors who most of the time rate their student teachers on teaching theories, as opposed to the cooperating teachers who look for practical skills and coping mechanisms, and one appreciates even more the demands upon a student teacher (Tanner 1). For example, in one study, the greatest differences between the evaluations of cooperating teachers and university supervisors were found on the student teachers' ability to maintain a professional appearance and use appropriate resources for developing lessons (Stolworthy 18) Thus, the triadic relationship of cooperating teacher, student teacher, and university supervisor is a unique and often complex one, particularly for the student teacher.

However, cooperating teachers must never minimize their efforts in light of a study that reports when school administrators examine the credentials of teacher applications, recommendations from the cooperating teachers exert the greatest influence in teacher selection (Zerr 2).

Another study that examined the personal, instructional, and professional roles and functions of the cooperating teacher found that above all, they should be effective mentors: caring, active listeners, who offer candid, regular feedback in a supportive manner (Enz and Cook 4). For example, my last student teacher, Eden Barbely, taught an effective and creative unit on business and friendly letters. Probably the most valuable technique I shared with her was the construction of a grade grid for each of the assignments that would facilitate grading and show each student what was expect-

Friendly Letter Grade Grid

1.	Is the letter in proper friendly letter form?	yes	no
2.	Does each paragraph have at least three sentences?	yes	no
3.	Are there fewer than two spelling errors in the letter?	yes	no
4.	Is the tone of the letter friendly but not informal?	yes	no
5.	Does the writer give at least three differences between middle and high school?	yes	no
6.	Is the assignment turned into your teacher in the following order: (1) letter with signature inserted in properly addressed envelope? (2) copy of letter with signature attached to grade grid (with proofreader's signature) for teacher to grade?	yes	no
7.	Are there fewer than four errors in punctuation and capitalization?	yes	no
8.	Does the paper contain at least three transitions that are marked on the teacher's copy?	yes	no
9.	Does the writer give the reason for writing the letter with a proper introduction?	yes	no
10.	Is there a proper conclusion at the end of the letter?	yes	no

I have proofread this paper: ______________________________
(signature other than teacher)

A=90-100; B=80-89; C=70-79; D=60-69; E=below 59 ed of him before his business and friendly letter was submitted for a grade and then mailed. These grade grids could be adapted for any written composition, and Eden felt comfortable enough with them that grade grids were attached to each composition we completed.

Business Letter Grade Grid

1.	Is the letter in proper business letter form?	yes	no
2.	Does each paragraph have at least three sentences?	yes	no
3.	Are there fewer than two spelling errors in the letter?	yes	no
4.	Does the writer give the reason for the request?	yes	no
5.	Has the writer chosen an appropriate celebrity and obtained an address?	yes	no
6.	Is the tone of the letter formal?	yes	no
7.	Is the assignment turned into the teacher in the following order: (1) letter with signature inserted in properly addressed envelope? (2) copy of letter with signature attached to grade grid (with a proofreader's signature) for the teacher to grade?	yes	no
8.	Are there fewer than five errors in punctuation and capitalization?	yes	no
9.	Does one paragraph compliment the addressee with sufficient detail to indicate a knowledge of his/her career?	yes	no
10.	Does the letter contain at least three transitions that are marked on the teacher's copy?	yes	no
I have proofread this paper: ______________________ (signature other than teacher)			
A=90-100; B=80-89; C=70-79; D=60-69; E=below 59			

Even as I converted Eden into believing in grade grids, I appreciated her techniques such as seating students in circles to share readings and critiques of compositions. After so many joyous experiences with student teachers, I developed my personal reasons for working with them, reasons which may reflect the experiences of other cooperating teachers as well:

1. You will see yourself as you were when you began your teaching career: idealistic, happy, optimistic, and full of the belief that you can make a difference.
2. You will realize that passing the baton to the new generation is part of life, one of Gail Sheehy's *Passages* (343). Fortunately, educational institutions still provide opportunities for on-the-job training to determine if there is a professional "fit" or "match."
3. You will appreciate the strength and confidence of this new generation. They're not shy or scared of facing classes or being scrutinized by observers, principals, or parents, as we were. They don't fear rejection; instead, they realize life is full of possibilities; careers other than just

> nursing, teaching, or secretarial positions can be explored. They don't feel locked into a job if they become unhappy; after all, the average worker changes jobs seven times in his working career. But they're just as committed and dedicated to making teaching work for them, and they want to be just as successful as we wanted to be in spite of problems we never dreamed possible thirty years ago: school violence; increased numbers of foreign-born students and ESOL classes; cafeterias that serve free school breakfasts and lunches; health technicians who address the problems of AIDS, child abuse, and birth control device dissemination; sexual harassment cases; day care centers for adolescent mothers and their children; an eroding of parental and public support; poor pay; talk of school privatization; and student disrespect.

I am not alone in expressing the belief that most student teachers will make excellent teachers. In a recent study of the student teaching program at the University of South Florida, 70% of cooperating teachers cited their student teachers' strengths as knowledge of the subject matter, rapport and communication with students, lesson planning, and creativity. But the most frequently cited area in need of improvement was classroom management, a skill that improves with time and experience (Mann 4).

The best gift I give to my colleagues and my student teachers is a small paperback from the National Education Association written by a business teacher from Parlier High School in California. In *The Ten Commandments of Teaching*, author Ray Reyes reminds all teachers of the importance of an upbeat attitude, a sense of fairness, patience, and positive reinforcement. He says succinctly what I consider the three most important rules of teaching,

(1) "Don't forget: if students win, you win!" (26);
(2) "Almost all classroom learning difficulties are related to the lack of classroom control" (16); and
(3) "When parents, teachers, and children are committed to the educational process, it is the best possible opportunity for learning to flourish" (11).

It is the task of all cooperating teachers to make student teachers believe and live those rules; and, fortunately for me, my student teachers have had those same beliefs.

Happily, the quality of these young people who choose teaching as a career will lift your spirits and give you hope that America's schools will stay strong; that someone even better can and will take your place; that indeed you have been a good mentor for these young teachers; and that some students will shout, "Shut up and let the lady teach" years after you've left school with your Shakespeare posters tucked under your arm and *To Kill a Mockingbird* buried in your book bag along with a student's end-of-the year evaluation that says, "You would be a great teacher if only you would update your wardrobe."

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BOOK REVIEW:

Teaching English in the Middle and Secondary Schools

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Maxwell, Rhoda J., and Mary Jordan Meiser. *Teaching English in the Middle and Secondary Schools*. New York: Macmillan, 1993.

If your philosophy of teaching is content-centered rather than student-centered, don't read this book!

If you don't want to think about why you do what you do in the classroom, don't read this book!

If you believe all knowledge is objective, don't read this book!

Teaching English in the Middle and Secondary Schools by Rhoda J. Maxwell and Mary Jordan Meiser is a new English methodology textbook which challenges both prospective and experienced teachers to think. Students come to my English methods class needing to develop the philosophies on which they will base all of their teaching, needing methodologies which are consistent with those philosophies, and needing organizational techniques related both to the content and to classroom management. This book provides a means by which to satisfy at least partially all of these needs.

Maxwell and Meiser have structured their chapters in a way to make students think about the content and then consider what they can do with that knowledge. Each chapter ends with discussion questions, suggested activities, and references. Therefore, students must consider the content and can synthesize knowledge with organizational techniques and anticipate future study of topics in which they are most interested or need further help.

As any good student-centered book will do, this one begins with a discussion of the population of students whom the prospective teachers will encounter. Many college/university English majors have had little experience with students who are average or below in English and who just might believe that all students will enjoy English as much as they do. Maxwell and Meiser try to temper students' idealism with some practicality by discussing the real world of the secondary student. At the same time, the authors do infuse enthusiasm for teaching into this chapter.

The philosophical basis of the book is the student-centered/subjective/transactional approach modeled after the theory and criticism of Rosenblatt, Bleich, Purves, Moffett, Beach, and others. However, the thrust of the book

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is the practical application of this philosophy and the methodologies by which teachers can excite students. As mentioned in the paragraph on structure, each chapter asks students to apply knowledge to questions and gives them excellent activities by which to put that knowledge to use.

Although Maxwell and Meiser believe in the integration of the language arts and constantly show how all of the sub-content areas of English work together, they do divide their book into sections based on the traditional literature, composition, and language structure. Strangely, though, they do separate oral language from the other chapters on language teaching. Each chapter establishes at least one philosophical basis for discussion and then moves on to give students ideas about how to teach within that basis. For example, Chapter 9, "The Nature of Language," begins by establishing "The Importance of Language Study" and then moves to such topics as "Oral and Written Language Acquisition: Implications for Teaching." Structuring in this manner helps students know that there should be a reason for all content and activities in the classroom.

To help students learn to organize, Maxwell and Meiser include three chapters on organizing content, again, with the same philosophy-to-methodology structure. As is their perspective with the entire book, the authors are practical in their approach. The first three subtopics in Chapter 12 (the second on organization) are "A Realistic View of Planning," "Some Activities for Chaotic Days," and "Other Realities for the Beginning Teacher." It is this type of approach which makes the book significant for students.

There are two subjects which I would like to see more fully developed in future editions of this book. The first is teaching special students (both gifted/talented and academically challenged). The second is classroom management. These topics are imbedded in chapters on content and organization, but in the practical world of teaching today, both need their own chapters.

Over all, though, *Teaching English in Middle and Secondary Schools* is excellent for my methods class. However, its utility is not limited to college/university classes. If you teach in a student-centered classroom, you can find valuable activities to support what you are already doing. If you feel unsuccessful or "stuck" in the objective/content-centered philosophy of teaching, this book will provide you with a renewed and refreshed perspective on teaching. If you like to think about what you are doing and why you are doing it—

DO READ THIS BOOK!

TRENDS AND ISSUES IN ENGLISH INSTRUCTION, 1994—SIX SUMMARIES

Informal Annual Discussions of the Commissions

National Council of Teachers of English

During their meetings at the recent Annual Convention, the six NCTE commissions informally discussed professional trends and issues. While the ideas below do not constitute official positions of NCTE or unanimous opinions of a particular commission, they do offer challenging, informed points of view. This is the tenth annual trends and issues report by the commissions.

THE COMMISSION ON COMPOSITION

The Commission on Composition (Marilyn M. Cooper, Director) believes that *assessment in writing needs to be redefined,* so that the focus is on instruction and on communication. Assessment should be seen primarily as self-assessment, a means of helping students—and teachers—learn from their work, and as communication with students, parents, administrators, and the public. The Commission sponsored the resolution, passed by NCTE, calling for all teachers of writing to eschew giving grades on student essays in favor of narrative evaluations, written comments, conferences with students, and other feedback. An NCTE committee will investigate alternatives to giving students grades in writing courses.

Parents and administrators do have a right to know what students are learning. *Assessment thus should be seen as an attempt to communicate with parents, administrators, and the public.* Rather than providing grades, statistics, and scores, teachers should involve parents, administrators, and the public in the activities of their classrooms so that control is shared, not taken away. Teachers can forge bonds and allay fears of new methods, threats to religious values, and indoctrination. Such invitations have to be innovative enough to avoid the assumptions that all people are free to come to school, that all are speakers of English, that all have confidence in talking with teachers, or that all will be properly respectful.

The Commission *applauds the involvement of NCTE in the national standards project* in collaboration with the International Reading Association. Because the emerging standards are broad (not skill-based) and adaptable to local situations, we believe they will have a positive effect on instruction. Through vignettes drawn from real classrooms, the standards depict what is really happening in schools and the kind of writing education teachers want for all students. We do believe, however, that discussions of standards must be accompanied by discussions about the inequities of funding of education. The resources (including libraries, adequate textbooks, technology, and teachers) necessary to providing good writing instruction must be equally available to all students.

The Commission continues to be *concerned about issues of access, pedagogy, and resources involved with the use of computer and media technology in the writing classroom.* Computers can increase students' interest in writing, especially when cheap portable computers are sent home with secondary students or supplied to college students; but technology is not equally accessible to all students. It also tends to overshadow essential activities that focus on inquiry, critical thinking, and analysis; and it often uses funds and space desperately needed for books and teachers. With multimedia packages and CD-ROM and hypertext resources for research writing, new ethical problems arise: problems of created representations that blur the distinction between fact and reconstruction, of censorship and control. *Teachers, then, must receive more training in how to deal with technology,* so that they are aware of its limitations as well as its possibilities; they must *investigate the ethical and political issues involved in its use* as well as the logistics.

The Commission views with alarm the *trend to reduce instruction in English in secondary schools to one semester.* Programs known variously as concentrated curriculum, block scheduling, or flex scheduling may sometimes be good in theory (in that they enable collaboration, longer-term focus, and more use of process pedagogy), but too often they compress and weaken writing instruction.

The Commission also *encourages new efforts to teach handwriting.* Illegible writing creates problems ranging from wrongly filled prescriptions to misdelivered mail. The Commission *continues to oppose corporate schools and the voucher system* because they increase inequities in equal access to good education. And, finally, the Commission *urges more attention to public literacy in writing classes at all levels.* Writing is a major form of inquiry and a way of acting on and in the world, and writing instruction should support this essential role for writing.

THE COMMISSION ON LITERATURE

The Commission on Literature (Reginald Martin, Director) endorses the following general statement concerning the study and teaching of literature: The Commission *supports teaching and learning about literature which encourages reading and writing of and about literature as part of a literate life for all students and teachers; teacher/student, as well as student/student dialogue; collective-meaning construction and acceptance of multiple interpretations; reading of real texts (real books, real films, real lyrics, etc.); inclusive selection of texts; teachers and students taking a critical stance; teacher and student collaboration on issues of curriculum, text selection, and evaluation.*

The Commission also emphasizes that *multiculturalism is a positive concept, emphasizing respect for diverse cultures and their use of language,* including the well-known and the little-known, the traditional and the unusual. We urge teachers and students as readers to read on several levels, including reading directly for information, understanding, and pleasure; the application of contextual information outside the text, including other texts which may aid in understanding; and the crediting of personal experience as a valid source of understanding the text.

The Commission *affirms the trend toward including writing in the study of literature and literature in the study of writing.* Such instruction emphasizes the cyclical and collaborative nature of the reading-writing process.

The Commission *continues to embrace the practice of writing in response to literature.* We recommend that student portfolios include forms of writing such as "free-writes," collaborative writing activities, double and triple entry journals, personal essays, and critical essays that respond to literature.

The Commission *urges use of descriptive, narrative, and argumentative evaluation of student performance and of language arts programs.* The Commission strongly *disapproves of the continuing trend toward imposing inappropriate quantitative evaluations.* Students should be able to show interpretive skills in a variety of ways, including oral response, dramatization, group construction of meaning through collaborative learning, and responses through various critical "windows." The Commission deplores single interpretations of literary works.

The Commission *encourages deriving new interpretive strategies from recent technologies* such as hypertext, CD ROM, and multimedia. We further recommend that teachers be involved in development of new technological texts; address the dangers of the divisive nature of the expense of technology; be vigilant against advances in technology that limit access to low- to middle-income students; consider the effects of "typifying" literature via computers; and insist that technology not be emphasized at the expense of the book.

The Commission on Literature *supports teaching and learning about literature which expands empowerment* by encouraging teacher and student collaboration on curriculum, text selection, and evaluation; motivation of students to teach themselves; allocation of some powers of teachers to various students; student construction of personal canons to understand the idea of canonicity.

New trends and issues identified by the commission focus on *language adaptation, censorship, free reading, curriculum revision, and collaborative writing.* Noting that many first-time school-bound students do not speak English, we urge the *encouragement of teachers who work to increase the number of languages they are allowed in classroom instruction.* The Commission deplores censorship of literary texts but *urges teachers of literature to respond with seriousness, tact, and flexibility to the diverse values and experiences that often provoke calls for censorship.*

The Commission *urges adequate resources for delivering a multicultural literature classroom.* We are especially concerned with institutional commitments to fund teaching development, text selection, and acquisition of appropriate resources for inclusive classroom environments. Also, literature should be defined beyond traditional genres; it also includes nontraditional texts and interdisciplinary discourse.

If many K-12 teachers look toward university teachers to guide innovations, university literature professors must question their own classroom structures as potential models. Further, the fact that a particular teacher is philosophically/pedagogically opposed to another teacher does not mean that either is a poor teacher.

THE COMMISSION ON READING

The Commission on Reading (Patrick Shannon, Director) reports that this year as last, *the primary trend in reading education remains national content standards.* The Commission wishes this were not true. We would rather that the trend were toward local, regional, and international collectives in which we could engage the theoretical and practical issues of reading education—issues which include the cultural, economic, and political basis of our and students' reading. Instead, some of us sit and fret over how to word content standards that will define how all teachers should read, teach, and equip themselves. Others stew over how to stop that wording, and still others wait for the word.

For at least three years, the Commission on Reading has cautioned NCTE and others about the Federal government's intervention in "the standards process," and we have worried about Federal intentions through the last three administrations. The NCTE has been careful to make distinctions between federal standards—those controlled by the government—and national standards forged from a consensus among the profession. The Council has been in favor of the latter and ambivalent about the former. Now that the government has withdrawn financial support from the IRA/NCTE/Center for the Study of Reading joint standards project, *we hope that the membership and other educators will reconsider the wisdom and likely outcomes of "the standards process."*

Despite the intentions of producing a document that will, in Miles Myers' phrase, "launch a new kind of civil rights movement" and despite a year's work of the English educators in the Joint Project, the U.S. Department of Education reported that funding would stop because "we find that there has not been substantial progress toward meeting the objectives in *any* of the approved applications, and there is serious doubt that the [Joint Project] will be able to achieve the stated goals within the given time." The Department will apparently mount a new competition for development of content standards in English. What should we make of this event?

(1) The Federal government has a content agenda for these standards. If this were not true, then how could the funding be pulled for lack of progress when the Joint Project has produced reams of statements, vignettes, and accomplishments in their selected rubric for standards development? If history is any indication, we should expect Federal standards for reading education that will have something to do with explicit teaching of decoding skills by a certain grade level and testable

outcomes on reading textbooks in the disciplines. Those were prominent features of the last two Federal government requests for proposals for the National Reading Research Center. Standards and assessments of this kind apparently can be produced in "the given time."

(1) The Federal standards will prevent national standards from having any impact. This is a lesson in power. With separate sets of federal and national standards for reading education—the former with ties to money and the latter from an organization which couldn't produce acceptable federal standards—which one do you think will stand up in court?

(2) The issue for the coming year, then, is that we have been had.

THE COMMISSION ON MEDIA

The Commission on Media (Carole Cox, Director) noted trends and issues in the areas of *national standards, teacher preparation, networking, interdisciplinary education, expanded concepts of media literacy, equity and access, and multiculturalism.*

National standards projects in the English language arts may fail to include media literacy at all, or in ways commensurate with current practice, unless media specialists contact those preparing the standards. Representatives with media knowledge are needed at standards discussions to assure that media curriculum is appropriately defined. We should also be *concerned about equity and costs when we advocate national standards that can involve expensive technology* such as computers or video equipment. Further, as performance standards develop, how can we insure that media literacy will be included at local, state, and national levels?

We have made strides with a proposed *NCTE book, Media Literacy,* and the upcoming Conference on Media Education at the University of Wisconsin. We need also to make inroads with the *Guidelines for the Preparation of Teachers of English Language Arts,* and to *find new ways to encourage school systems to provide in-service training.* As with teaching about computers, teachers often feel inadequate teaching media and lack time or resources to teach themselves.

To promote more media education, we can *expand our networking with arts organizations.* Additionally, with media of increasing importance on the political scene, what responsibilities for media literacy are a part of the social studies curriculum, and what responsibilities are ours? And how can the two groups work together on national standards for media literacy?

Schools at all levels are stressing *an interdisciplinary approach, including media and popular culture, which provides an ideal opportunity for students to study television, film, advertising, magazines, and other artifacts of popular culture,* in conjunction with history. Media and popular culture should be a critical part of interdisciplinary studies.

THE COMMISSION ON LANGUAGE

The Commission on Language (Vivian I. Davis, Director) is *concerned about the chilling effect* on curricular choices and best practice in language arts research and instructions *caused by increasingly effective lobbying by the partnership of certain business interests and political groups* who intend to privatize education, impede diversity, and prevent uncensored investigation of ideas, cultures, and world-views that they do not share.

The Commission *stresses that the study of grammar, at all levels, should be based on the understanding that the meaning and function of grammar are grounded in language—not the other way around.* The discrete teaching of grammar, as prerequisite to or as a vehicle for improving competency in oral and/or written language arts cannot, therefore, be condoned as good practice.

The Commission cites *a number of equity issues that must be recognized and confronted as the tensions underlying diversity.* Without prioritization, those issues include the effects on student voice, oral and written, by the limits of "standard" and/or "formal" English; the inhibitive nature of academic discourse and writing; the lack of knowledge and validation of global Englishes; the lack of knowledge and/or acceptance of dialects; text representations of language and models; the question of who influences and/or teaches language awareness curricula; the direction and uses of language research; and the role of "outside experts" on language arts research and instruction.

Too often *language arts instruction in four year colleges and graduate programs depends on the knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and experiences of individual professors, not on what practitioners need to know to help students* achieve and develop competency in communications. Also, *although an increasing number of potential language arts teachers begin their studies at two year colleges, virtually no attention is given to the language arts knowledge base required of professors who teach in those colleges.* The Commission emphasizes the need for urgent and immediate focus on increasing and improving the required language study component of education for language arts practitioners at all levels, particularly, higher education.

THE COMMISSION ON CURRICULUM

The Commission on Curriculum (Dorothy King, Director) recognizes continuing *positive trends such as teachers using information gained from research, including research from their own classrooms and others'; teachers becoming more involved in curriculum development; more segments of the public becoming involved in the curriculum process; the implementation of curriculum and methodologies that accommodate pluralism; and the application of curriculum that considers different learning styles. Unfortunate trends of reliance on standardized assessment and instruction continue.*

The Commission *believes that the politics of curriculum should be raised to a more conscious level,* that *all groups and individuals must be given as* *complete access to the curriculum as possible in order to take their rightful place in a pluralistic and democratic society.* By delivering the curriculum in a variety of modes and by honoring diverse learning styles, teachers can allow all students to achieve excellence and to value and respect their own rights and responsibilities as well as those of others. The Commission *supports the anti-censorship stands taken by NCTE and SLATE.* Subtle forms of censorship, such as publishers' restraints on professional writing, control the range of information available to the public and the profession.

The Commission *supports use of literary texts that reflect cultural and gender diversity at all grade levels.* Through multicultural literature, students' viewpoints are expanded and they learn to value diversity. The Commission also *urges the modification of instructional programs to meet the needs of the ever-increasing numbers of students who speak languages other than English.* Assuring that these students learn English is a priority, as is respecting their own language and culture.

The Commission *applauds the integration of all language modes*—talking, listening, reading, and writing—in the classroom. Learners use language in all its modes to construct knowledge. As the conceptualization of curriculum changes from knowledge transmission to knowledge creation through inquiry, active and energetic language use becomes central to classroom activities. Also, the Commission *applauds the increasing trend in development of interdisciplinary curricula.* Viewing knowledge as a total rather than a fragmented experience enables students to discover connections, and it promotes cross-cultural understanding and better self-awareness as world citizens.

The Commission *supports use of computer technology for telecommunications, information retrieval, and interactive multimedia instruction.* At the same time, we *deplore the proliferation of "electronic workbook" computer software, technologies geared toward standardization of learning,* and *inappropriate uses of satellite connections* (such as enabling large classes with a single teacher). The use of technology raises important questions about, for example, which technological devices are best for the classroom and about misuses of technology.

The Commission *supports the effort to establish comprehensive standards for English language arts for which a variety of authentic assessments can be developed.* Authentic assessments (such as uses of portfolios) offer valid information about what students know and are able to do; they are demonstrations of language in all its modes. They are learner- referenced, not criterion-referenced. Teachers and administrators need support and training as they learn about and implement authentic assessment.

The Commission *endorses the notion of curriculum and staff development as ongoing and applauds teachers who take greater responsibility for their own professional growth.* Preliminary drafts of the Standards Project for English Language Arts place needed pressure on teacher education and staff development to emphasize process instruction, collaborative learning, and other strategies that encourage learners to risk, discover, negotiate, and critique.

The Commission *recommends designing ways to form collaborative relationships between parents and teachers.* For example, teachers can provide parents with frameworks for understanding their classrooms by sharing examples of their children's work.

For all of the positive trends cited in this report, the Commission acknowledges and urges the need for teacher commitment and for the encouragement and financial support of state and local agencies and administrators at all levels.

MCTELA: A Professional Organization for Educators Interested in English/Language Arts

The Maryland Council of Teachers of English Language Arts (MCTELA) was founded in the late 1950s. Originally geared to English instruction, it expanded in the 1970s to include all language arts teachers. Business meetings and conferences used to take place at the same annual meeting, but the organization has grown to include monthly Executive Board meetings and semi-annual conferences. Activities include publication of the *Maryland English Journal*, quarterly newsletters, Teacher of the Year selections, "Showcase" writing competitions for elementary students, and representation as an affiliate of the National Council of Teachers of English.

The purposes of the Council are to improve the quality of instruction in English/Language Arts at all educational levels, pre-kindergarten through university; to encourage research, experimentation, and investigation in the teaching of English; to sponsor publications of interest to English/Language Arts teachers; to represent the interests of English/Language Arts before the public; and to integrate the efforts of all those who are concerned with English/Language Arts instruction.

Senior Citizens' Creative Writing

As a counterpoint to our Maryland Showcase for Young Writers section, this issue of the *Maryland English Journal* features the winning essays in the Allegany County Seventh Annual Senior Citizens' Creative Writing Contest. Allegany County is the only Maryland county to hold such a contest and the annual nature of the event fosters an on-going writers' support network among the group members, many of whom enter each year.

Contestants must be at least 60 years of age and must not have been employed as professional writers. This years' contest theme, "The Way It Was," generated 25 essays. Reprinted here are the seven winning essays—first, second, and third place winners—by Florence Yankelevitz, Dixie Brinkman, and Walter E. Festerman, respectively—and four given honorable mention.

The contest is sponsored by the Allegany Human Resources Development Commission's Area Agency on Aging, in conjunction with the Allegany County Commissioners.

The Tradition of the Passover Seder

FLORENCE YANKELEVITZ

He sat, half-reclining, on the snow-white pillow at the head of the table, dressed in his best clothes, his head covered by the traditional skull cap. As he looked around at the woman standing at his side and at the three children, all scrubbed and attired in their finest, he smiled with pleasure, raised the silver cup of wine high, and recited the age-old blessing. We opened the Hagaddahs, our little books, as he signalled that the service was about to begin.

This was my father, and we were about to start the Passover Seder, a tradition that had been observed by the Jewish people for thousands of years. At the time Christians are observing their Easter holiday, we are asked many questions about the Seder because it is believed that Jesus was in Jerusalem for the Passover and that the Last Supper was, in fact, a Seder. So I like to answer the questions by telling the way Passover was with my family. Perhaps this can make for better understanding of a different faith.

My mother stood before the holiday candles and recited the ancient blessing upon kindling them in their shining brass candlesticks which she, as a young girl, clutched in her hands all during the long and arduous journey from Lithuania in the hold of a ship to the New World.

Although these ceremonies symbolized the beginning of our Seder, we had known it was at hand for weeks. The house had been cleaned from top to bottom, the dishes changed, and the special foods arranged in cupboards. Tonight the smells of the food simmering on the stove and warming in the oven made our mouths water, but we knew we must wait for the first part of the Seder service before we could eat.

And now, we joined in the opening ceremonies. Since I was the oldest, I got to ask the four questions, all relating to why this night was different from all other nights. I gave the answers, too, that Passover has two meanings. One, chiefly, that it is a great festival of freedom, and, two, it is the spring festival when the people in the ancient land of Palestine gathered in the spring crop of grain.

We followed my father's narration in our Hagaddahs as he repeated the story of the exodus of our people from Egypt, the first known search for freedom the world had known. He recounted the oppression of the Jews while they were forced to build the pyramids, and of God's sending Moses to plead with the Pharaoh to let his people go, and the Pharaoh's refusal. We were given pieces of greens, usually celery or lettuce, to dip into salt water which symbolized the tears of the suffering people. He pointed to the other symbols on the Seder plate: horseradish signifying the bitterness of the suffering people; a mixture of apples, nuts and wine, the symbol of the mortar used to bind the pyramid stones; and the lamb shank bone. The latter was part of the paschal lamb whose blood was smeared on the doors of Jewish homes so that the Angel of Death, sent as a last resort, would pass by those homes.

We were introduced to the matzo, the unleavened bread, eaten during this holiday because the people, in their haste to flee Egypt, had no time to let their bread dough rise. We were so excited when one piece, called the *afikomen*, was wrapped and hidden so that my sister, the youngest, could hunt for it at the very end of the Seder. We knew that the end of the first part was at hand when we recited together the ten plagues sent upon Egypt because of the Pharaoh's refusal to let the Jewish people go. As each was recited, we dipped our fingers in the glasses of grape juice at each place.

At last, the Hagaddahs were laid aside, and the delicious dinner was served. The same foods my grandmother, great grandmother, and all my female ancestors always served came to the table: matzo ball soup, gefilte fish, roast chicken, fresh green salad, and Passover sponge cake made without flour.

After the meal was over, the concluding prayers were chanted and sung, and, although we were practically asleep, we came awake with curiosity when the door was opened for the mystic arrival of the prophet, Elijah, whose cup of wine had sat on the table throughout. There is a legend that this ancient prophet visits every Jewish home on Seder night and partakes of his cup of wine in the belief that someday he will return in person to bring a new era of peace and happiness to the whole world, when all will be free from slavery and poverty. We were sure, as we watched, that the wine went down.

My sister searched for the *afikomen* as we cheered her on, found it, and was rewarded with the granting of her wish.

As I picture in my mind the memorable Seders in my parents' home during my childhood years there, my memories are pleasurable and precious. I know that my children will remember, as I do, the solemn, annual ritual that accompanied Passover every year in the years they were at my home, as the tradition was followed. As they have their own Seders, they will know that the tradition is "the way it was," the way it is now, and the way it will always be in all the generations to follow.

Mill Island

DIXIE BRINKMAN

I seated myself in the cool shade of the back porch at Mill Island and let out a sigh of relief. For Heritage Days, I had helped clean all 26 rooms, each boasting a fine old fireplace, of the 2-1/2 story house.

I felt proud to have been connected to Mill Island, located Southeast of Moorefield just off South Fork Road, since our daughter, Sharon, married Royce Saville, a prominent young lawyer from Romney who bought the brick mansion in 1975.

The house, beautifully situated on 28 acres, was built in 1798 by Felix Seymour. In 1840, an elaborate expansion was added that took seven years to build.

Folks from all over the valley brought grain there to be ground at the grist mill fed by the Mill Run surrounding the estate. That's how Mill Island got its name.

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It was a memorable day the first time I rode down the dusty road and saw the stately old house where Hardy County's records were hidden during the Civil War. It was like no other place I'd ever been.

The lawn was landscaped with round boxwood leading to the front porch, a five trunk Osage Orange tree, an herb garden, fruit trees, and flower beds filled with clumps of bloom, both the work of nature and man.

It was hard for me to reconcile the early ways of life, but I was aware of it the first time I walked through the house with wonder and delight. It was like walking back in time.

When the Heritage Day guests began to arrive I felt like I was seated on a porch in Savannah listening for the sound of hooves rounding the curve of the road. From inside the house floated the voices of Sharon and the Strawn girls, dressed in gowns from their ancestors, graciously pointing out portraits of people who left their mark on Mill Island.

I tried to picture fat cooks making their way to the house with food they cooked in the summer kitchen to keep the heat out of the big house.

In the chill of winter they busied themselves back in the big house, filling the basement with the pungent aroma of apple pie and simmering pots of soup. Large platters of biscuits and fried ham swimming in gravy were sent up to the dining room in a dumb-waiter. I could almost hear the click of china and rattle of silver being placed, with dignity and style, around the long table in the middle of the floor that seated sixteen.

The least-used room in the house was the parlor. But when wagon wheels were heard cutting grooves in the driveway, maids hustled about lighting overhead chandeliers that glowed with hundreds of prisms reflecting every ray of the candles they bore. Sitting on the piano were pictures of dignified ladies and fine old gentlemen who looked down on the guests being served paper thin pastries.

When the chandeliers again hung dark, the maids retired to small rooms on each floor where bells told them when they were needed next. These rooms were later made into bathrooms.

I can't count the times I climbed the open stairway and stopped to search for the date hidden in the face of the grandfather clock with all wooden parts, standing like a guard in the landing. I got a tingling every time I passed the painting there of Felix Seymour. His piercing eyes seemed to follow me.

My favorite room in the house was the sunken library filled with rare books and chairs with deep seats. It was surrounded by six bedrooms. The blue, the white, the gold, and so on, with four-poster beds and feather ticks puffed up like massive marshmallows. Each room was called by the color of its furnishings.

The red bedroom with the gold fringed canopy decorated with pictures of cherubs floating on a cloud was said to be haunted.

Mill Island, in itself, with the hidden stairways, and a captain's walk where owners kept an eye on the slaves working their way across the fields, was also a ghostly place where terrible things were said to have happened, some not so long ago. A rape victim still lives in a nursing home somewhere in the community.

No reason is known for the suicide in the downstairs bathroom, the seven murders, or the cold spot just inside the sitting room door.

To give character to Mill Island I'm told that the house wraps its thick walls around the ghost of a white child killed by one of the slaves.

In May of 1992, Mill Island was occupied by a grateful couple who counted their blessings and turned the place into a home where everyone was welcome.

They had such hopes and opened up the house for Heritage Days dressed like Martha and George Washington. But their peace and happiness was short lived.

In October, five hundred people gathered on the front lawn for the celebration of the life of George Griffith, who died in an AC-130 flight crash where none of the 6-person crew survived. I never felt so alone in my life as when the 130 flew low over the crowd, bidding the last good-bye to George.

But life still goes on at Mill Island. For once you've been to there it always pulls at your heart.

Cows and Fences

WALTER E. FESTERMAN

Why do cows (whatever color) eat green grass, drink dirty water, and then give clean white milk? It's nature at its best. When I was young, most inhabitants of the earth had a cow or two. Back then, the best way to have fresh milk was to have a cow. My family was no exception. Her name was Daisy. I thought I would jot down a few memories on the subject of "Cows and Fences." Both were a necessity—an integral part of "the way it was."

When I was a child (I was born in 1907), cows were allowed to roam the neighborhood. Sometimes they would wander a mile or so from home. My job was to go and find the cows at milking time. It was not an easy task. Sometimes it would require a great amount of time. A cow bell was handy. You could tell by the sound of the bell if it was yours.

At milking time, every family member had to take turns at milking. If a female member did the milking, she would wear a bonnet to protect her head. After sitting on her stool, mostly on the right side of the cow, she would put her head into the flank of the cow's right rear leg. In this way, she could rest her head. Milking was a tiresome job.

Some cows were unruly. If you were not careful, they would kick the milk pail. They would swish their tails to rid themselves of the pesky black flies, also keeping them off of the milker.

To milk a cow, you first had to wash the area. You would take hold of one or two teats or protuberances and would squeeze them and the milk would squirt into the pail. Then you would ease off to let the fluid flow back into the teat. Over and over again, you would do this until all the teats were drained of milk. Each cow had four teats or udders.

The milk was then carried to the house, where Mother prepared it to be put in the milkhouse. A milkhouse was a small shed-like building, built of wood or stone. Stone was the best. A spring of cool water ran through the milkhouse, which generally kept the milk cooler than the outside temperatures.

From the milk, Mother would make butter, smearcase (cottage cheese), and various cheeses. To make cheese, you would form curdled milk into a ball about 6 inches in diameter. The balls were put away to cure or harden. If you cut the ball of cheese too soon before hardening, the uncured part would run out. If you had ever seen the contents, you would never eat cheese again (if it had arms and legs, it could roll the ball around!).

A cow can go dry, meaning no more milk, and this is when an interesting event is about to take place in the temperament of the animal. We can learn a fundamental lesson from the cow, somewhat like the birds and the bees.

If a cow had a young calf, it was generally calm and serene. But, when she got to the point where she wanted a new calf, she would bawl and carry on like a hungry youngster, only in a different way. That's the way it was. Someone in the family had to take the cow to a place where it could be calmed down by another cow. Even the "calmer-downer" would go wild if he got wind of the one he was to calm. He would carry on and snort, even breaking down fences.

In about 283 days, she would have her calf and a new supply of milk. After it was weaned, the calf was more or less on its own. It would begin to eat solid food like its mother, but the cow would continue to give milk for human consumption or otherwise.

If you walked about in your bare feet where a cow had tread, you must remember you have not lived if you have never stepped on fresh cow manure and had it ooze out between your toes. Much fun was had in those days with cow dung.

Now we come to fences. Fences were of many materials—stone, wire, zigzag rails (the kind President Abe Lincoln was supposed to have split), and board fences (some vertical, others horizontal). Most fences were crudely constructed but were meant to fence cows or keep them off of property.

Fences were used to protect gardens and crops. Cows could do much damage to a field of grain or vegetables. Fences protected one's food for the coming winter and also the grain and forage for cattle, hogs, and horses. My family's fence was barbed-wire. It enclosed Daisy quite well.

What has happened to "the way it was" with respect to cows and fences? A revolution, you could say.

Cows are not allowed to roam the neighborhood anymore. The law says they are not allowed in corporate limits.

Cows do not kick the milk pail. Pails are not used. Milking is done by machine and long hoses carry the milk to a milk truck which takes it to a pasteurization plant which prepares it for delivery to the consumer.

Cows do not mate the old way. They are artificially inseminated. The cow's cycle comes and goes and it doesn't know why the calf is there or what its purpose is.

Milk products are all done by mechanics in modern scientific processes. Our cheeses are much improved. But what about those holes in cheese? Some say they are formed by gas. This could be true with the improved methods.

Most previous uses of fences are not necessary now. Few people have gardens—fewer have cattle. Fences are still utilized, some for cosmetic reasons. Electric fences control pets and some cattle. "Spite" fences keep out nosey ones and mark property limits.

In the final analysis of a much needed and maligned creature, what would we do without bologna, glue, and fertilizer?

Of all the subjects that I could have written about, I just could not get away from "cows and fences." They were a traditional part of life for many people for many years.

Life on Winchester Road

GEORGE C. LEASE

Life on Winchester Road in the middle 30s and early 40s was not easy. Money was hard to come by. The summers were long and hot, and the winters were cold, with plenty of snow. Nobody paid much attention to the conditions because everyone was in the same position as you were.

There was always a ball game in the field where the Allegany Animal Hospital is located. It was possible, if not probable, to have 10 to 15 players on a side, parents, girls, and boys all playing together. Maybe you would get 5 outs instead of 3, depending on who was batting, who was pitching, and whether it was a girl or a boy. Of course, when someone struck out the good-natured ribbing took place. Harry Wright was always the pitcher for both sides and he always took great delight in striking someone out. Scores were not kept. The game could go on for hours. There was never a winner or a loser. With the exception of a ball and bat, equipment was scarce.

In the winter, the same field that was used for ball games in the summer was now the landing area for ski, sled, and toboggan runs. The hill overlooking the field was great for sledding. We made a toboggan out of a metal sign that we found. It held 6 or 8 people. When you started at the top you were flying when you reached the bottom; you needed all of the field to slow down and stop. A big fire would be built to keep warm. Looking back now it seems the snow was always better at night. My clothes, at the time, were not the best, and I was always cold, but I would never think about going home to get warm.

Looking back now, it seems that summer started in April and ended in October. Winter started around Thanksgiving and ended around Easter time.

Shoes were not worn very much in the summer, and the end of your toes always had the skin torn off from going barefoot. Come summer's end you could walk on almost anything.

When I was 15 I got a job. Pay was $.50 an hour. Days were ten hours long and a half day on Saturday. Come payday I thought I was in heaven.

Roller skating at Crystal Park was the big thing then. The Big Bands still came to play for dancing, and the dance marathons were still held occasionally, but roller skating was king. The skating rink was owned by Dick Young, and the organ was played by Johnny Miller. Mr. Young gave Ray Neat and me a job as skate boys and my pay went to pay for a new pair of shoe skates. Now I was really something, $30 a week and a new pair of skates; life could not get any better. The rink was always packed and Johnny Jett, the rink manager, had his hands full controlling the crowds. On weekends and holidays the rink stayed open almost all night. The only bad thing was I had to walk home. A phone or a car was a luxury we could not afford.

When you are 12 or 13 years old life is not taken very seriously. Every day is a new adventure. I made up a game to be by myself. I made guns out of wood and stalked the woods looking for anything that moved.

Television, VCRs, and tapes were in the far distant future. Radio was the thing for leisure time. I remember listening to Fibber McGee and Molly, Jack Benny, Amos and Andy, and the Big Bands on the radio. My favorite was Glenn Miller on Saturday afternoon.

Those carefree days ended all too soon. I enlisted in the Navy in 1943 and the world was never the same after that.

I drive on Winchester Road now and I hardly recognize it. Homes now stand where farm land was worked. Business places are all along the road covering the open fields. Time moves on—for better or for worse.

Track Meet Highlights

ALMA G. LOGSDON

"Track meet. What is a track meet?" asked Janie, who had recently transferred to Beall High School.

"Didn't you have track meets in your old school?" I asked in surprise.

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"No," she answered. "What is a track meet?"

"Each year in the last part of May all the schools get together to play games and run races," I explained.

"Why?" That was Janie's next question.

Patiently I tried to describe what seemed to me the highlight of the school year. I still think of it with such fond memories.

Preparing for track meets began early in the spring after the snow of winter had melted and the days became longer and warmer. The balancing beams were brought out of storage so that pupils in grades four, five, and six could practice the required routine in order to qualify for their badges—bronze, silver, and gold. Each beam was about eight feet long, two inches wide, and four inches high. To earn a bronze badge, a pupil had to walk the length of the beam, turn around, walk to the center, and jump off. That doesn't sound difficult, but to a fourth grader from one end of the beam to the opposite end seemed like a mile, even after weeks of practice. Believe it or not, some children practiced on the railroad tracks. Each succeeding year, the routine became a little more difficult, requiring more practice to develop greater balancing skills. How proud we were when we finally earned all three badges. Even then, we were working toward the gold.

One great advantage of the badge program was that every child had the opportunity of participating and knowing the feeling of accomplishment in achieving the reward. Not everyone is an athlete, but in this activity everyone could try and succeed at his own school. This was preliminary to the big meet held at one high school athletic field. When school enrollments increased, the meet was transferred to the Cumberland Fair Grounds. The first of those annual athletic contests was in 1915. Games were scheduled for the morning. Track and field events began at 1:00 p.m.

It was not the battle of the sexes. Boys competed against boys and girls competed with girls. The events were in three categories—elementary school age, junior high, and high school. For some events the junior and senior high school participants were classed according to weight.

In looking through my scrapbook, I found a program for the Fifteenth Annual Athletic Contest, Friday, May 31, 1929. The first event noted was "Flag Relay Race—Elementary School Girls." What memories came flooding through my mind! How we practiced at recess, noon, and after school to transfer the flags one at a time to the empty bottles from the bottles which held them when the relay began. It always seemed as if the bottles at the meet had smaller necks than those with which we practiced. We didn't realize that the tension caused by the competition made us a little unsteady. I do know it was a relief when my turn was over and I had tagged the next person in line. There were eight girls on a team. In 1929, the county record was one minute, twelve seconds, held by the girls from Westernport. I am not sure we knew these statistics, but I am sure we did our best so we would gain points for our school.

Other events for girls were Block Relay Race, Run and Catch Relay, Obstacle Relay, Hit and Run the Bases. Events for boys included 50, 60, 70, 80, 100, and 220 Yards Dashes; 440 and 660 Yards Medley Relays; One Mile Relay; Standing Hop, Step, and Jump; Baseball Throw for Distance; Baseball Throw for Accuracy; Speedball Bat for Distance; Target Throw; Running Board Jump; Running High Jump; 8 Pound Shot Put; Soccer Kick for Distance; and Dodge Ball Throw for Distance.

The morning was devoted to Dodge Ball and Volley Ball Tournaments, Girls' Hit Ball and Touchdown Pass, and Boys' Speed Ball Tournament. Schools were credited with points for first, second, third, and fourth places with highest score going to the victors. All day the participants would wonder how their respective schools were faring.

In my scrapbook I found a news clipping recapping the results of the 1930 track meet. It was headed with this banner: "BEALL HIGH SCHOOL, FROSTBURG, NOSES OUT ALLEGANY BY SINGLE POINT IN PUBLIC SCHOOL MEET." The article stated that Beall had won eight of the sixteen meets, that four new records were established and two old records were equalled, and that 3,943 participated in the events. There were nine high schools represented—Allegany, Barton, Beall, Bruce, Central, Flintstone, Mt. Savage, Midland, and Pennsylvania Avenue. With the exception of Allegany, all high schools also housed elementary and junior high grades. Green Street and Cresaptown had elementary and junior high classes. Fourteen elementary schools also participated—Centre Street, Columbia Street, Gephart, Hammond Street, Hill Street, Jackson, Johnson Heights, LaVale, Luke, Maryland Avenue, Mt. Royal, Union Street, Virginia Avenue, and West Side.

What a glorious day! I savored every minute of it despite the severe sunburn I acquired every year. I can still visualize our "uniforms." They were a romper style—sleeveless, rounded neckline and elastic in the legs. Each person had an identifying number. In 1929, my number was 171. Even though we were tired, we hated to board the buses to return to our schools. The poor driver had to listen to our shouting and chanting of school yells. One that was peculiar, but always stood out in my mind was:

Uskey wow wow!
Wiskey wee wee!
Holy muckey eye!
We're from Beall High —
The mighty Beall High!
Wow!

The Way It Was: A Retrospective

MARY O. STRAW

In recent years I have often speculated about how it was when I was born on September 30, 1907. My birthplace was a small, new dwelling which my parents had erected on Pennsylvania Avenue in South Cumberland. The site for the house had been purchased on a monthly payment deal from

Catherine Laing. It was part of the Laing farm which had been converted into a housing area. It was from this connection that Laing Avenue's name was derived.

In 1892 the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad established its facilities in the area which became known as Egypt. Since there were no street lights in its early days the phrase "black as Egypt" was often heard. The expanding railroad establishment created numerous employment opportunities, and the demand for housing led to the construction of many dwellings both single and double. The main thoroughfare was known as Virginia Lane because it led to the region which was Virginia before the Civil War.

In the early years of the twentieth century the community which had quickly grown on the northern side of the railroad workplace was designated as South Cumberland and grew into a separate entity. That fact is evident today when it can be noted that Virginia Avenue and Maryland Avenue, although a continuous roadway, has two titles.

A thriving business expansion took place during this decade. It was not necessary for the residents to leave their area except to transact business at the courthouse or city hall or to patronize either the Western Maryland or Allegany Hospital. Mail had the name of South Cumberland in the address. Close at hand were business, entertainment, and service establishments.

When my family mentioned the occasion of my birth, they always related the fact that the doctor who had been selected to attend my arrival had left town to attend the Jamestown founding celebration; and, when he was called, his substitute came in his stead. To my parents' chagrin the replacement was a young unmarried doctor with whom they were unacquainted. They found him to be skillful and kind as well as personable. He became a friend and served as our family doctor as long as his services were required. He was Doctor Charles L. Owens, who became our city's leading obstetrician and pediatrician. The other event I often heard of was about a local man being lynched in Cumberland because he had killed a policeman.

The house I was born in was sold, and we moved into a second floor flat on Virginia Avenue, and that is the locale of my earliest memories. Our living room windows afforded an interesting view of Virginia Avenue. We had a bustling panorama before our eyes. First floors of the buildings surrounding us were occupied by business firms. There was a drug store, butcher shop, two saloons, a combination pool hall and bowling alley, a grocery store, a Greek candy kitchen, and two hotels. My sister and I were not permitted to leave the vicinity of our home, but we had a bird's eye view of our neighborhood, both front and rear.

Motor vehicles were seldom seen, but we were charmed by the variety of horses pulling the delivery wagons of the commercial companies serving the area. There were many small one-horse wagons, bigger ones with two horses, and still larger ones with four-horse teams. The garbage wagons, as well as the two wheel drays that delivered coal to many households, were pulled by horses.

I was in awe of the funeral processions which moved very slowly. The horses' bridles carried black plumes, and the drivers wore black clothing. The mourners were seated in closed cabs, and the hearse was small and painted white if the deceased were a child. A gray hearse might be used for a young woman and black for the aged. The sides and rear of the hearse were clear glass, and the casket could be distinctly seen. I was deeply touched by these somber processions and was respectful of their significance. Many times I was tempted to count the cabs, but I didn't dare because I had been informed that bad luck would surely occur to anyone who did so. At this period of time the departed were kept in their residences and were viewed by their friends and relatives. A wreath fashioned of tulle with wide streamers of ribbon was hung on the home's entrance. These symbols of death were known as crepes. It was customary for a small group of acquaintances to sit overnight with the corpse.

An Italian man operated a food store in the shop under our flat. He, his wife, and two small children lived in several small rooms at the rear of the store. In the backyard of the building was a large one-story storage shed. Frequently, a large number of Italian men would arrive and spend the night in the shed. They were immigrants who were *en route* to the midwest where they would seek employment. They spoke no English and carried their belongings in a burlap sack. These groups aroused our curiosity because they differed from the people we were accustomed to seeing.

We were always alerted when the fire equipment or police wagon approached by the loud clanging of bells and the clatter of the running horses' hooves as they pounded the ground. The fire fighters were stationed on a street near Chapel Hill, and the gear was suspended over the horses so they could be quickly harnessed when needed.

The police patrol wagon was equipped with steps in the rear and bench seats on each side. There was no roof, and we had a clear view of the occupants. A trim uniformed policeman stood on the steps and prevented any escapes.

I was introduced to the magic of motion pictures at one of the several theaters on Virginia Avenue. A variety of pictures were shown—news reels, a feature, a comedy, and often tantalizing scenes from future attractions. The films were soundless, but suitable music played by local pianists accompanied them. The captions and conversation appeared on the screen. How frustrating that was until I learned to read competently. Many persons were unable to read, and their companions could be heard reading for them. This was disturbing, and if possible we would move away from the annoyance.

According to my recollections that is the way it was.

The Veil Woman

MARION WINNER

I remember when every small town had its colorful characters, be they mortal or of the spirit world, and every child had his own particular concept of "The Boogie Man"—that strange and frightful creature who lurked under stairs, beneath bridges, and in dark alleys everywhere.

Some swore to have witnessed this nocturnal illusion in the swirling mists of evening gliding along an empty street. Others claimed to have heard the shuffling phantom at midnight, doggedly treading their heels, ready to pounce.

When I was a child, it was "The Veil Woman" who sent my feet flying along the pavement at dusk until I reached that special lighted window of my home.

"Don't be late," my grandma cautioned, when the dishes were done and I headed for the door. "The Veil Woman might be on the prowl."

Her dire warnings always slipped my mind until I faced the dark road alone. Then her grim words echoed through my mind like the ghostly tones of our old Victrola when I slid the speed lever too far to the left.

But, like children everywhere, the flower-scented sounds of summer held an enchantment all their own; and, for a time, I would push back the ominous threats of Boogie Men and wish only that my carefree moments with friends might never end and that we could be ten years old forever.

I recall one of those beguiling June nights when the moon lit up the darkness with its luminous sheen. We were playing an elaborate game of hide and seek called "Watch the Moon Skip the Rocket," and it was our team's turn to hide.

Our captain chose our spot well—a shadowy space between a pigeon coop and an old garage at the lonely end of the lane. All six of us crammed our wiry bodies sideways into that narrow corridor as far as we dared.

The captain reviewed our signals one last time, then left to join the seekers who waited in another part of town.

The minutes passed slowly in our cramped confines, and tempers flared harmlessly.

"Get off my foot!" someone shrieked. "You're scrunching my toes!"

"And your frizzy hair's tickling my nose!" the offended comrade shot back. "So lean the other way!"

But the grumbles soon died down to a whisper and an occasional giggle as voices were heard in the moon-drenched street.

"Watermelon! Watermelon!" our captain yelled.

This was the signal to "lay low," and we obeyed instantly. The other team searched eagerly, but failed to spy our dark hideaway, and we strained

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our ears for the "all clear" cry of "Red Pepper!," for only then could we rush to our home base.

We waited and waited. My left leg fell asleep, and my cousin's sleeve caught on a jagged sliver of wood, but we all remained frozen to our spot against the wall. Just the soft cooing of the pigeons broke the stillness of the night.

Suddenly, a figure rose up in front of me. It was a lady, and she was dressed all in black. A long mesh curtain covered her face and billowed around her body like a shroud. Behind that flowing lace veil, two eyes glowed out at me like the eyes of my striped tabby in the moonlight.

"The Veil Woman!" I gasped.

That dreaded lady who prowled the sidewalks and secluded areas after dark loomed before me like a specter from the grave.

The hair prickled at the back of my neck, and, as she stretched her arms towards me, a flash of gold flickered in the moon's brilliant light and through the dry wood and tar paper smell of the old garage the merest hint of rose petals drifted on the air.

At that moment, the eerie call of an owl sounded from the oak trees across the "crick." As if on cue, I screamed—a shrill, ear-splitting screech that filled our narrow cranny like a whistle in a wind tunnel.

The trap door inside the coop sprung open with a loud crack, and all the pigeons roused up in one maddening swoosh of wings.

I screamed again, and pushed my cousin forward as hard as I could. We all fell out the other end onto the cool grass of a neighbor's yard.

Amid the frantic scrambling of arms and legs, the high-pitched call of "Red Pepper!" pealed out across the rooftops, and we raced like the devil himself was after us toward our special telephone pole on Back Street that signified home base.

Years later, my cousin and I were rummaging through an old trunk looking for a Halloween costume when we uncovered a pair of long black gloves. Folded neatly beneath them lay an ancient black lace veil.

I stared dumbly at my cousin as the faint fragrance of rose petals sent my thoughts spinning backward in time.

"It's just a coincidence," I assured her. "Everyone keeps old things like these in their attics."

But back in the shadows by the flue, an elegant dark cape hung almost to the floor. A flash of gold lining caught the sunlight streaking through the small side window. Unlike the dust-laden objects cast aimlessly about, the cape's deep folds appeared freshly cleaned.

Coincidence?

I smiled.

The Veil Woman—that fearsome lady in black who once roamed the murky corners of the night—would soon be on the prowl again.

I would have bet my hat on it.

Biographical Sketches

Florence Yankelevitz graduated from the Frostburg Normal School in 1932. She worked for 36 years as a social worker with the Department of Social Services. Since her retirement in 1969, Yankelevitz has volunteered her time to many organizations, including Lions Manor Nursing Home and the Cumberland Chapter of Hadassah.

Dixie Lee Brinkman completed correspondence courses in creative writing and art following her graduation from Bruce High School. She is presently director of the local Children's Writing Guild. Her interests include writing, art activities, and sewing and designing costumes for the Women's Club of Romney Fairy Tale Theater every year.

Walter E. Festerman holds a Bureau of Mines engineering certificate from the University of Maryland and has been employed as a coal miner and a worker at the local Celanese plant. He enjoys birdwatching and gardening.

George C. Lease completed his GED and gave 32 years of service to the City of Cumberland Fire Department. His hobbies include reading, woodworking, and hunting.

Alma G. Logsdon, a graduate of Beall High School, received a bachelor's degree from Frostburg State and an MA from the University of Maryland. For 39 years she served the Allegany County Schools as a teacher and elementary principal. A veteran of the Army Air Force during World War II, she is a charter member of the Allegany County League of Women Voters and a member of Delta Kappa Gamma, an international honorary society for women educators. Logsdon is active in church work and enjoys crafts, gardening, and upholstering.

Mary O. Straw graduated from Frostburg Normal School and worked as a public school teacher, most recently at Westside School. Her interests include genealogy, studying local history, and quilting. Straw also enjoys spending time with her 2 children, 4 grandchildren, and 7 great-grandchildren.

Marion Winner graduated from Beall High School. She is a homemaker who enjoys painting and walking.

Maryland Showcase for Young Writers

This showcase features the writing of young people in the second through eighth grades. The writing was submitted by Rebecca Brenneman of Northern Middle School in Garrett County; Laura Menin, the first editor of the *Maryland Showcase for Young Writers* and current editor of her school's magazine, of Highlandtown Elementary School, P.S. 215, Baltimore City; Carol Peck, a poet in schools throughout the State, whose submissions are from St. Catherine Laboure School and Somerset Elementary School in Montgomery County; Kathleen Stoner of Mt. Savage School in Allegany County; and Fran Wisniewski of Highlandtown Elementary School, P.S. 215, Baltimore City.

Christopher Chamness, Grade 6

NATIVE AMERICAN SPIRIT POEM

Wolves teach sheep
  how to run;
Salt Lake teaches slugs
  to check the water before swimming;
Cats teach toads
  how to be quick and graceful;
A rain storm teaches drought
  how to get wet;
A typhoon teaches a grizzly bear
  power;
A sonic boom teaches a turtle
  how to move fast;
Jupiter teaches Tiny Tim
  that size isn't everything.

Laura J. Cuttler, Grade 6

THE SEAGULL

Soaring, diving, with such peace and grace,
You are one with the wind,
Soaring, diving, spinning, circling,
Silent . . . .

Feeling only wind, hearing only sky.
Above the world you see all, hear all, love all,
For in you there is peace.

Laura J. Cuttler, Grade 6

HAPPINESS

My freedom has no limits, nor does my contentment.
My spirit is free and independent.
I have no obstructions in life, but many joys.
I am riding forever into the horizon
upon a golden horse of dreams.

My imagination is the limit, reaching to the
depths of true happiness.
The rainbow of events my life contains
is there in front of me.
I dare not move;
for what I see is magic in itself.

I move and then realize what I am really looking at.
Our hearts contain the true magic of happiness,
if we can only look inside to find it.

Eric Schriver, Grade 7

JIM

Jim had all the ingredients
To be the perfect American rock star.
Beautiful, brilliant, and brave,
And yet dead at twenty-seven.

You may find this rather ironic
That this rock star was hooked on chronic
That is why we mourn for this
Rider on the Storm.

It is not hard to find his grave
With all the graffiti leading up to it.
And big black Morrison clouds
That hover overhead,
With his bust found in the dark fringes below.

The grave-site was silent.
The feel of cold rain dripping down the neck
of a young rock-n-roll fan,
Strumming a Doors song with a guitar in his hand
At the site of your grave.
The young fan was silent in gloom.
Jim, why did you have to die so soon?

Alexandra Nuwame, Grade 8

I AM

I am the color yellow,
giving light to all the world,
shining my joy on people.
I am the sound of a subsiding storm—
angry but soon forgiving;
I am the sound of a wheeling seagull,
Searching hungrily for my
heart's desire;
I am the texture of sand, fine;
I have the taste of candy, sweet;
I am the sound of rattling water
pounding against the seashore;
I am a fish, both black and white,
Searching the white waters
for a way between;
I am the smell of fresh-cut roses
giving my love to all people;
I am the daughter of a jaguar
ready to strike my prey;
I am a dream about to be discovered.

Michael Skinner, Grade 3

SUMMER

My favorite season is summer because you get to wear shorts and swim in pools. I like to take walks when it is hot. I like to take vacations in the summer. My mother lets me stay up late. I like summer because you get to go outside.

Deon Dew, Grade 3

SUMMER

My favorite season is summer because it is hot and there is no school. Most of the time, you get to ride your bike unless you have a flat. You can go fishing with your grandpa or your father. Short-sleeve shirts or no shirt at all is what I wear. You can stay out all day. You can stay home and watch TV.

Suzanne Pilone, Grade 3

SUMMER

I like the season of summer the best. In the summer it gets dark late. You can ride your bike, and you can go swimming. You can go outside without your coat. You can pick flowers. You can wear cool clothes.

Sarah Ann Elizabeth Clark, Grade 3

FALL

My favorite season is fall because you can jump in the leaves. You can throw them around. You can rake the leaves in a big, big pile. You can jump in a big, big, pile of leaves.

Rachel Baker, Grade 7

SILENCE

Silence is a cold feeling
        that always makes you
                alone;
You can always hear that
                        pin
                          drop.
And when you see all those people
        as quiet as can be
You always want them to say,
        "Come and talk to me,"
But then, finally the silence
        gets so sharp
                you could cut it with a knife;
Then you finally begin to pace
        like a lion full of fright;

Finally the silence gets to you.
You're about to blow your top,
You run around like a crazed maniac
        waiting for the noise to begin,
But then you finally learn
        the silence will never end.
After a long, long time
You finally learn that
        all you have to do
                is say a word
                        and it will
                                end,
And I guarantee
        it will free you
                from the madness,
                        my friend.

Nalina Sarma, Grade 7

CREATIVE COLLECTION

I gather love and happiness
For when the day comes that
My heart aches with
sorrow.

I collect squeaks and
Laughter, and all sorts of noise,
So I shall never go mad
with silence.

I collect warm sunbeams;
When the sky is dark and
gray and cold pellets of
water fall, the sun
Will warm my thoughts.

I collect Saturdays
So the frustration of work will
Be diminished by the
carefree breeze.

I collect friendship;
There will always be
Beings that care about
me.

I collect the soft blue from the
ocean of sky;
I collect the green from the
dewy grass;
I collect the purple from
radiant royal violets;
I collect gold from the
warm, bright sun.
I collect colors
So I can paint a picture
of my perfect world.

Ashley Thornton, Grade 4

APRIL

A pril has Easter in it, and people wear pretty clothes.
P eople go outside because it's nice and sunny.
R abbits go out from their hiding places, and flowers start opening.
I go to parties during Easter.
L et flowers bloom before you pick them.

Jonathan Wimmel, Grade 4

THE CRY OF THE WHALE

When the people come to tape me,
    I cry;
But when they leave,
    I'm in peace, so I don't cry;
I cry of my ancestors,
    killed for makeup—
Is the beauty God gave you not enough?
Do you have to kill us?
Do you think about the tube of lipstick you use?
Is it worth it—
One whale for artificial beauty?
Now you know why we cry,
Because of the senseless killing of our kind . . .
Is it worth it?

Ward Schaefer, Grade 4

RED

Red is fiery; red is hot.
You may think it's pretty,
    but it's really not;
Every day Red fights Yellow
For the key to the sun.
As the day gets long,
Red gets strong;
In the afternoon Red wins the sun
And gets to keep it till the day is done;
Red rides a chariot around the earth
To spread false danger and his mirth;
But Red's mirth is nothing fun,
    just killing thousands, one by one.

Jason Vandergriff, Grade 4

BEING A CAR IN FEBRUARY 1994

I'm a brand new car, and I'm freezing. I have ice on me, and I'm stuck in the snow. I move slowly. I slide on ice. When I stop, I slide. When I park, I slide. When I move, I splash water and snow. I get very dirty. I get sleet all over me. I am covered with snow and salt. I'm afraid that I might crash because of the ice. I can't wait until summer

Shane Herbert, Grade 2

MY FAVORITE GIFT

My favorite gift was my dinosaur soap. It was a Triceratops, and it had three horns. The soap was purple. I did not like the smell of it. I used it when I took a bath.

Shane R. Russell, Grade 6

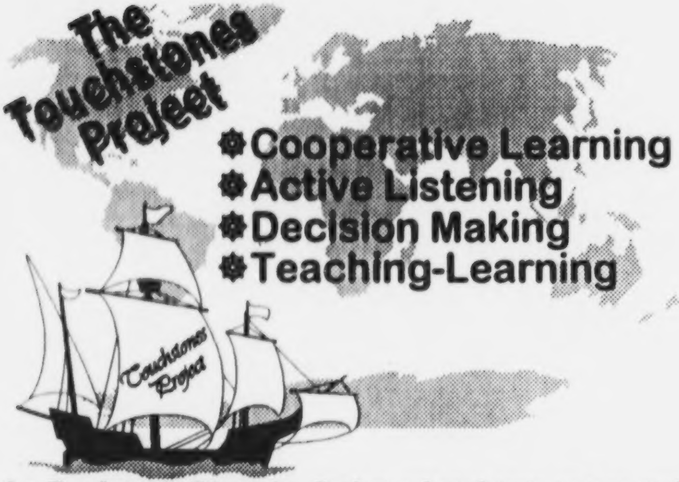
A CHRISTMAS STORY (PATTERNED AFTER THE TRUMAN CAPOTE STORY OF THE SAME TITLE)

Imagine a cool, late December morning, the morning of Christmas around one year ago. Think about a cozy dining room with a brightly lighted, sparkly Christmas tree with plenty of gifts surrounding it. Consider a circular oak table and cabinet near the dazzling tree. Imagine a child around the age of nine, a tall father, and a sprightly mother.

The child wakes up and scratches his sleepy eyes. He stumbles out of bed and yells up to his dozing parents. They awaken and seem very dreary. The child yells up again, and the parents slowly dress in casual clothes. The child is very excited as the two parents stumble down the creaking stairs. They hurry over to the presents under the tree, and the eager child is just chattering away.

The child happily and madly opens his presents. He shreds the wrapping paper into bits and scatters them around the room. The covering comes off and reveals a beautiful 30/50 pound bow with 12 aluminum arrows. Time also reveals an ethofoam target. The parents madly open their presents. The mother opens a small box of pearl earrings with a pearl necklace that the child bought her, and the father reveals a sparkling Seiko watch. All the family members are pleasantly pleased. They then rush over to the stockings, and in what seems to be an effortless struggle, the child opens a movie; the title is *Shane*. The child also opens a very small package and reveals a fine cassette tape.

Breakfast time comes and the family settles down to a delicious homemade meal of scrumptious pancakes, hickory smoked bacon, and gooey cinnamon buns. After the feast, the mother and child stay home and admire their gifts as if they were very expensive jewelry. The father, however, loads up for another day of skiing. Everyone is pleased with the love and happiness of this Christmas, and they look forward to the next.



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>
> High School Student, Albuquerque, NM

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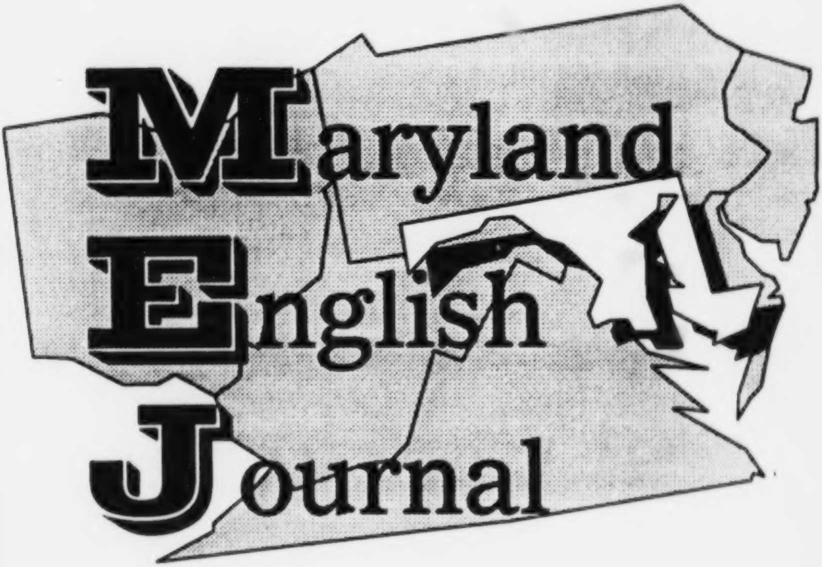

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Maryland Council of Teachers of English/Language Arts
The State Affiliate of the National Council of Teachers of English

Volume 29, Number 2 **Spring 1995**

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Maryland English Journal is a semi-annual refereed publication of research and instructional practices in English/Language Arts and allied fields, preschool through adult levels. The editors encourage authors to submit articles pertaining to instructional practices and/or research of special interest to English/Language Arts educators and scholars. Appropriate subjects include literature (fiction or non-fiction), linguistics, literacy, critical theory, reading theory, rhetoric, composition, journalism, technical writing, technology in the classroom, English as a second language, pedagogy, *assessment, and other professional issues. All* areas are equally welcome, as long as the topic is of general interest to the profession and the treatment is accessible to teachers whose particular expertise lies in other areas.

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Manuscripts submitted to ***Maryland English Journal*** must conform to the following standards:

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2. Manuscripts must include an abstract of 75 to 150 words.
3. Manuscripts must include a cover sheet containing the title, name and instructional affiliation of the author(s), date of submission, and other professional or biographical data to be noted in the journal.
4. The first page of text must include the title of the manuscript but not the name(s) and instructional affiliation(s) of the author(s). Manuscripts should be free of internal references to author identity.

STYLE

The content, organization, and style of manuscripts must follow the current MLA citation system (please use the month or season as well as the year in citing journals) and the NCTE *Guidelines for Nonsexist Use of Language*. Authors using computers should avoid special type (bold, italic, etc.) and use left justification only.

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3. Submit only completed manuscripts.
4. Send manuscripts to the editor, ***Maryland English Journal***, at the address below. The ***Journal*** welcomes submissions at any time. However, to facilitate our review and publication timelines, submissions are particularly invited by **March 10** and **September 10**.

REVIEW PROCESS

Associate editors review blind submissions, a process that can take up to three months. Accepted manuscripts may need to be edited for clarity, organization, language, or style. Published authors will receive two complimentary copies of the issue in which their submission appears.

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From the Editor's Desk

FROSTBURG
STATE UNIVERSITY

This issue begins with an article that describes and justifies an answer to a question students ask when their papers don't match their teacher's expectations—"What do you want me to do?" It finds that answer in the concept of phronesis, that what a writer should do is to strive to be reasonable, knowledgeable, and trustworthy.

Next comes a set of three pieces about literature instruction. The first piece explores select literature pertinent to the need for greater gender balance in the high school literature curriculum; it offers practical advice for achieving such balance, including guidelines for the adoption of a more organic and flexible view of the traditional literary canon. The next article suggests an alternative approach to the lecture format when teaching introductory literature classes—an approach that relies heavily on collaborative learning techniques including journal writing, group work, open-ended questions, and class discussion. When using this approach, the author has found introductory literature classes more interesting and dynamic for both instructor and students. The final piece in this issue's literature-related trilogy examines the possibility that students at a small, historically Black university might reject "Araby" because it is set in an unfamiliar culture. More important than the role of cultural familiarity and prior knowledge were students' feelings of frustration, attributed to their struggle to internalize Joyce's unfamiliar text schema.

Next comes a villanelle inspired by an Artists-in-Education visit to Myersville Elementary School, followed by a light-hearted retrospective penned by a former podium user.

After our regularly featured Maryland Showcase for Young Writers is a brief history of MCTELA, based on research gleaned from the organization's archives—mostly newsletters from 1974 to 1991—by MCTELA historian and *MEJ* intern, Jennifer Klemens.

Special thanks for editorial assistance are extended to Victoria Everett, Alan Foster, Linda House, Beth Howell, Sharon Ritchie, and Curt Singleton.

Each of us involved with *MEJ*'s production hope you enjoy this issue. I continue to invite your input and submissions as readers of the *Journal*, and I thank you for your support of this process.

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"What Do You Want Me to Do?": A Delayed Answer to a Distracted Student's Question

Richard M. Johnson
Mater Dei College, New York

The article describes and justifies an answer to a question students ask when their papers don't match their teacher's expectations— "What do you want me to do?" It finds that answer in the concept of phronesis, that what a writer should do is to strive to be reasonable, knowledgeable, and trustworthy.

"What do you want me to do?"

The young woman was furious, almost to the point of tears, when she asked the question. She had worked hard on the paper; but the paper had not worked. She wanted to know what to do. I sat behind my desk and thought hard about it. I had been telling the class all semester about writing. I thought my advice had been good.

After all, I have taught writing, from high school to freshman composition, for some twenty years; and I was not in a pedagogical rut. For the last half-decade or so, I have pursued a doctorate in composition theory. At the small two-year college where I teach now, my students are the kind I love to teach—non-traditional students, mostly under-prepared—the kinds of students Richard H. Haswell calls "writers at the bottom" (303), the students Mina Shaughnessy writes about in *Errors and Expectations* and Mike Rose in *Lives on the Boundary*. They are not teacher-proof kids, but by and large they are willing to work to improve their writing.

I study and read to try to find ways to help them improve their own writing; but the hunt is frustrating. C. H. Knoblauch and Lil Brannon advise teachers to abandon all reference to classical rhetoric because Cicero has nothing to say to the modern student; and Richard L. Enos advises using classical rhetoric in teaching writing. I know using the modes of discourse is based on outdated 19th century psychology, as William F. Woods and Jon Harned have shown; but I also know that Florida's junior placement exam is a question James Hoetker and Gordon Brossell devised to fit the discourse mode of definition.

I know, like Collette Daiute, that writing at computers is no panacea for solving writing problems; but I also know, like Marcia S. Curtis, that students like to work on the machines, which is an advantage in itself. I have tried peer response groups on the advice of Ken Macrorie and others, and have read Myron C. Tuman's article saying that peer groups merely perpetuate the second-class status of students in schools. I have even dropped topic

Richard M. Johnson is a native Arkansan who moved just south of the St. Lawrence River to keep a cool head while working on a Ph.D. from Indiana University of Pennsylvania. He teaches composition, bakes cheesecakes from scratch, and serves as production editor of *MEJ*.

sentences, only to find Frank D'Angelo asserting that topic sentences can be good. In short, I know about and have tried many strategies and techniques to help students understand what good writing is and how to improve their own written expression: and still the question comes, haunting my reading and my planning—

"What do you want me to do?"

It is such a valid question. Perhaps it is time to consider again what we ask our students to do when they write. I refer to freshman composition students, those just entering the academy who are expected almost immediately to enter into the academy's conversation, even if in a very limited way. The text contains no revolutionary information. We need, though, to reexamine our concepts from time to time. Time changes and viewpoints change along with it. Then, too, knowledge in the humanities does not seem to follow the kind of linear progression that Crane says scientific knowledge follows. Stephen North says nothing gets thrown away in the lore of composition; composition recycles.

The reexamination draws from three main but somewhat diverse sources. The first perspective is Kenneth Burke's conversation metaphor. The second is William Perry's "cow" and "bull" epistemology regarding evaluation of student essays. The third is Aristotle's concept of phronesis. I would like to examine those concepts in relation to that bridge we try to construct/grow in our classes between students trying to assess their own and others' writing while at the same time trying to understand their instructors' standards of assessing writing. In short, I would like to propose a possible, if belated, answer to the young woman's question.

Burke's Metaphor

Kenneth Burke conceives of academic writing as ongoing conversation. He pictures that never-ending written conversation in the following way:

> You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you, to either the embarrassment or gratification of your opponent, depending upon the quality of your ally's assistance. However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress. (3-4)

The metaphor applies to our students; they are newcomers to an on-going conversation in a community unfamiliar to them.

Burke's advice is for the newcomer to listen until she knows what is going on, then contribute her own observations, listen to the response, find allies, recontribute, and so on. It is a process metaphor. The conversation never stops, never reaches a conclusion. In a written sense, the conversation becomes an artifact—a processed glyph within which people read and respond, are responded to, revise, and continue onwards in the written multilogue over time—a written conversation punctuated at times for professionals by collegial conferences and conventions and increases or declines in influence and prestige within the discourse community.

For students, however, it is a conversation interrupted by peer conferences, by teacher comments, and by grades. Their conversational world is an artificial setting that requires them to jump head-first into a conversational pool without much time to get used to the water. We ask them to a large extent to sink or swim in an academic pool more or less similar to their career seas. I sometimes think that we as composition teachers are like fish hatchery supervisors or swimming instructors for writers who will eventually plunge into various careers to drown, tread water, or excel in those seas.

When we see the students, though, they are still in the training pool. They are not prepared to jump into the deep seas and rough waters of their careers. Still, we ask them to jump into the pool, one that is often over their heads. Maybe they need water wings. Burke's metaphor is a good one; but our students are still outside the open door of that ongoing conversation, still in the tidal pools of the career oceans. We need to understand our students' positions before we can help them effectively.

The Cattle of Composition

It is at this point that William Perry's somewhat disturbing valuational epistemology comes into play. Briefly, in "Examsmanship and the Liberal Arts: A Study in Educational Epistemology," Perry describes a situation in which a young man received an "A" for writing an examination essay in a subject for which he was not enrolled and about which he knew nothing. His friend, who was enrolled in the class, received an "F" for an essay written about the same subject and on the same occasion. Perry concluded that both essays deserved to fail.

The essay by the student not enrolled in the class deserved to fail because it "bulled" its way to the answer, "to bull" defined as

> to discourse on the contexts, frames of reference and points of observation which would determine the origin, nature, and meaning of data if one had any. To present evidence of an understanding of form in the hope that the reader may be deceived into supporting a familiarity with content. (32)

On the other hand, Perry concludes that the answer given by the enrolled student also deserved to fail, since it "cowed" its way to the answer, "to cow" defined as

> to list data (or perform operations) without awareness of, or comment upon, the contexts, frames of reference, or points of observation which

> determine the origin, nature, and meaning of the data (or procedures). To write on the assumption that "a fact is a fact." To present evidence of hard work as a substitute for understanding, without any intent to deceive. (32)

Perry's contention is that a good essay needs to present a synthesis of both "cow" and "bull" to be judged worthy. The good essay needs to present in its text both the data and the relationships that give the data meaning. A good essay needs, in other words, what Frawley calls "citationality," at least for academic writing. If formal citationality is necessary for academic writing, it also seems clear that other fields of writing (such as grant writing, business writing, technical writing) each have their own standards of citationality and form, though not necessarily the same forms as prescribed in MLA or APA documentation formats.

Entering students, then, need to transcend Perry's composition cattle gender dichotomy and write essays that both display good data and connect those data to a wider framework of ideas. It seems doubtful that some worksheet for students to follow will help them eliminate the dichotomy, though, especially in the light of Irvin Hashimoto's analysis of the uselessness of structured heuristics. Stephen Toulmin, in *Human Understanding*, states that the social sciences find it hard to come to consensus about goals or methods because they need a "less restrictive body of concepts" (388).

Perhaps the same thing is true of composition. Maybe our concepts are too narrow. Maybe the 800-page handbooks or the fifty item essay checklists are trying too hard to answer every question in advance. I cannot in any honesty answer the young woman by saying "I want you to learn the infinite cluster of comma usage rules" or "I want your papers to follow your outline exactly." Nobody agrees on comma usage; nobody I know writes one of those textbook outlines before writing. The young woman's paper had misspelled seventeen words, but correcting them would not make the paper work. I need something, some concept that will span the gap, one we can both comprehend—for I cannot tell her that the paper is good and she cannot understand why all the rules she learned are not working.

Back to the Profound

"What do you want me to do?"

The question seems basic, but it is also profound. It also seems to be less a question of action than of being. What I want my writers to write are papers that will convince me and others that they are acceptable beginning entries into the never-ending conversation about their subjects, papers that are neither "cow" nor "bull" but combine the best of both expository techniques. I want them to be proficient writers, but I need to tell them that in a way that they will understand and connect to their thoughtful consideration of their own and others' text(s).

Louise W. Phelps offers a path to that end with her discussion of Gadamer's explication of Aristotle's concept of phronesis. Phronesis is defined as "knowledge directed towards right conduct" (215). Phronesis is "not really a kind of knowledge, but a habit and potential for bringing tacit knowledge to bear productively in new situations" (218). In writing, phronesis surfaces as the most powerful of persuasive appeals as described in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* —the ethical appeal, the manifestation of the writer's character in the text.

> There are three things which inspire confidence in the orator's [writer's] own character—the three, namely, that induce us to believe a thing apart from any proof of it: good sense, good moral character, and goodwill. (161)

At bottom, those things are what I want my students' writing to be—knowledgeable, trustworthy, and reasonable, for those characteristics are reflective of the right conduct that is phronesis, not only in writing but in the context of culture in general.

Stephen M. Fishman writes that John Dewey's vision of education was to help students see the need for cooperative activity among individuals in society. Phronetic qualities foster such cooperation. A person who strives to be reasonable, trustworthy, and knowledgeable is a good citizen. A person who strives for those qualities in writing can become a proficient and able writer.

It seems to me that those three standards are what I want my students to work towards, what I want my students to judge their own writing and others' writing by. I want them to use sources to back up their ideas because that shows that they are knowledgeable. I want them to value correct usage and punctuation, not because those things are essential in themselves, but because they show a writer is knowledgeable about the craft. I want them to argue even-handedly because a good writer needs to be reasonable. I want them to think about what they write in relation to their projected audiences because that helps to make a text more trustworthy.

"What do you want me to do?"

I want you to work to make your writing reasonable, not extreme, biased, or prejudiced. I want you to make your writing trustworthy, neither "bull" nor "cow." I want you to make your writing knowledgeable, well-supported in terms of whatever conversation you decide to enter. That's what I want you to do, young writer. That's what I want you to work towards. I wish I had you back in front of my desk asking that same question today. I think I have an answer now, one that you and I can both understand. That answer will not solve all the problems you have in writing; but it may give you a clearer idea to judge by.

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MCTELA: A Professional Organization for Educators Interested in English/Language Arts

The Maryland Council of Teachers of English Language Arts (MCTELA) was founded in the late 1950s. Originally geared to English instruction, it expanded in the 1970s to include all language arts teachers. Business meetings and conferences used to take place at the same annual meeting, but the organization has grown to include monthly Executive Board meetings and semi-annual conferences. Activities include publication of the *Maryland English Journal*, quarterly newsletters, Teacher of the Year selections, "Showcase" writing competitions for elementary students, and representation as an affiliate of the National Council of Teachers of English.

The purposes of the Council are to improve the quality of instruction in English/Language Arts at all educational levels, pre-kindergarten through university; to encourage research, experimentation, and investigation in the teaching of English; to sponsor publications of interest to English/Language Arts teachers; to represent the interests of English/Language Arts before the public; and to integrate the efforts of all those who are concerned with English/Language Arts instruction.

Where Have All the Women Gone? Gender Issues and the High School Literature Curriculum

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Connelly School of the Holy Child

With the debate during the last decade and a half over multiculturalism and the canon, male and female learning styles, and "cultural literacy" on many educators' lips, one would expect to find radical changes occurring in the high school English classrooms across the country. Research shows, however, that English curricula remain largely unaffected and continue to be dominated by the traditional perspective of white male authors and characters. Throughout the eighties and beyond, educational reformers have continued to call for changes in the curriculum to address gender equity, both in the formal and informal reading encountered by high school students, and they offer practical advice for achieving such "gender balancing." In the end, a more organic and flexible view of the literary canon may provide the best solution to achieving a broader representation of male and female voices in the classroom—and the world.

The 1980s raised troubling questions for teachers, especially teachers of high school English. Following a decade during which women's studies courses flourished at colleges and universities across the country, raising questions of gender equity as part of the larger influence of the women's movement, Carol Gilligan's 1982 *In a Different Voice* challenged our notions of how students learn by documenting *how* individuation patterns develop differently for boys and girls. Did our teaching methods and materials, one was forced to ask, meet such challenges of equitable representation and effective teaching? By 1987, E. D. Hirsch stirred up the controversy of *what* students should learn, by extolling "cultural literacy" and the need for students and citizens to acquire a fundamental knowledge of certain basic texts and facts of western civilization. Did we need to reinforce then, like it or not, the *status quo* perspective of male Euro-centrism? While educators and parents jumped on the "basic education" bandwagon, students at Stanford University, during the winter of 1988, rebelled and demonstrated against the traditional "great books" curriculum, demanding broader representation of world literatures and works by women (see Pratt, "Humanities for the Future"). With such an emphasis on gender-based learning and its connection to the nature of the canon of literature we hold so dear claiming the spotlight of the American consciousness, one would think that English teachers at the very least would be questioning their current reading curricula, if not tossing them out entirely. Not so.

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A review of the literature reveals that high school English faculties in recent years appear to have assigned the same tried and true texts, dominated by male authors and male characters who depict a male perspective of the world, and that they do this despite the current debate about the canon. According to Margaret Carlson's instructional guide, "Teaching Books by and about Women," made available in 1987 through the National Council of Teachers of English, 90% of the most frequently taught books in grades 9-11 focus on main characters who are male, from *Lord of the Flies* to *Catcher in the Rye*. What is worse, Carlson cites Judith Fetterly's assertions that women are often asked to "identify against themselves" (2) by reading about women through a (negative) male perspective. Teachers' very assumptions about what is a classic, and therefore worthy of teaching, are defined by male perspectives, maintains Carlson (3).

Such concerns are echoed in the 1992 publication of *Gender Issues and the Teaching of English*. Nancy Mellin McCracken and Bruce C. Appleby note, in their introduction, the increasing evidence documenting differences in male and female learning styles, particularly in relation to language and literature. Studies have begun to accumulate which indicate "most American classrooms are structured to favor the style...that has been genderized as male" (4). McCracken and Appleby thus conclude that probably more than half of the student population (including males who learn in a "female" fashion) is lost in the learning process. Therefore, they see the role of the English teacher as crucial:

> [E]ach decision we make...—which story, taught by whom, by what methods, for what purposes, followed by what kinds of writing assignments, evaluated how, by whom, and for what purposes—is a decision we make from a theoretical framework that includes gender, self-consciously or not. (6)

The idea of a fixed canon of teachable works, as Charles J. Thomas put forth in the 1992 paper, "The Organic Literary Canon," will no longer accommodate our awareness of how students acquire a sense of the world and of themselves. It is not until we can see what we read in relation to who we are that we will question the literature we teach as a matter of course.

Confronting the Canon

Addressing the annual meeting of the 1988 Conference on College Composition and Communication, Lynn Z. Bloom responded directly to Hirsch's best-selling book, *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know*, by calling for a broader education, especially for males, about other perspectives. Hirsch's book, she claims, makes 76% of its references to (mostly white) men, 24% to (mostly white) women. Bloom draws on Gilligan's *In a Different Voice*, with its suggestion that men and women may respond differently to reading and writing, to call for more awareness by all to the issues of gender in literature. With this awareness in mind, Bloom believes the canon of accepted literary works should be "exploded" (13), specifically to make room for more nonfiction as a legitimate expression of women's perspectives. To conclude, Bloom states that "literature by women and men [that] speaks to both women and men, though at times in different modes with different messages, is truly What Every American Needs to Know [*sic*] in order to be assured of cultural literacy" (15).

Taking her cue from studies beyond Gilligan's that indicate male and female readers alike currently learn to read from a *male* perspective, McCracken suggests, in "Re-Gendering the Reading of Literature" (published in 1992), that all readers need to learn to read from the female perspective as well as the more commonly taught male view. Citing a 1988 survey of literature anthologies used in American high schools, where selections by women have increased in recent years to a visible, if not respectable, three out of ten, McCracken points out that opportunity for exposure to female perspectives, though still limited, is at least greater than it once was. The next obstacle, she claims, is teachers themselves, who must rise above

> the old notion that if it's not written on a grand scale, or touching one of the four or five recognized themes [such as *man* against nature, *man* against society, etc.], or at least written by a male author important enough to warrant a graduate seminar, it's not worth teaching. Even so, this newly discovered literature [by women] is hard to teach. Our old graduate school notes won't work with these "new" texts. (57)

As a solution, McCracken believes teachers should read "freshly," using all they know from their own experience, rather than just perpetuating the "gender-limited critical readings" they've been taught; then they need to share their "honest" readings with colleagues and students (57).

Reading "Freshly"

English Journal, published by the National Council of Teachers of English, entered the debate on gender and literature during the 1980s with two special issues devoted to the subject. In both instances, discussion focused on the canon—in essence defining the canon as the curriculum in high school English classes.

In 1985, *English Journal* devoted an issue to the theme, "Women's Studies and English Teachers." One article, by Arlene Metha and Mary Aickin Rothschild, describes the impact women's studies programs of the 1970s have had on the study of literature in high schools. Even though proponents of women's studies had sought integration with general literature programs since the early 1980s, and despite the availability of funding for education and training related to gender equity, "few...[works by women] found their way into the high school classroom" (27). Metha and Rothschild postulate that the existing curriculum based on the canon appeared uncrackable due to several factors: a back-to-basics trend in education generally, backlash against women's issues on a national level, resistant students who often see works by women as "irrelevant," and teacher education programs mired in traditional precepts and lacking commitment to equity issues (27). The authors recommend more outreach to high schools from university-level women's studies programs, closer parental monitoring of sexist school curricula, and education of teachers and curriculum specialists about women's studies as a part of basic education for all students (28).

J. Karen Ray's "The Ethics of Feminism in the Literature Classroom: A Delicate Balance," also part of the 1985 *English Journal* special focus on gender issues, proposes that teachers use feminist inquiry as *inquiry*. That is, Ray suggests that teachers should invite students to "question received values" (54), a common goal of feminist theory and of literary analysis, but teachers should also guard against propagandizing political views. To do this, Ray outlines three ways to confront the canon or *received* curriculum. First, teachers should review the canon. After looking at canon-formation and the perspectives it emphasizes, teachers might then address the "distortion" and "imbalance" found there by supplementing the reading list with women authors (55). Ray cautions, however, that insisting on women's representation in the canon merely because they are women does a disservice to all. Next, Ray proposes (borrowing from Adrienne Rich) "re-visioning" the canon (56), applying feminist readings to canonical male authors in order "to liberate...female characters...from the stereotypes to which they are confined," as well as "to examine female relationships" and look at "the patriarchal structure" (57). Shakespeare is an obvious example here. Again cautioning against overkill, Ray says that such a feminist reading should not be the only critical approach. Finally, Ray suggests that teachers respond more broadly to the canon, accounting for social and historical implications beyond the traditional male heroic perspective. Teachers and their students should shape a purely emotional response into true critical analysis (58). By providing what she calls a balanced approach to gender issues and reading, Ray believes women's studies can be mainstreamed into general literature courses and can benefit all students (59).

Four years after its special issue on "Women's Studies and English Teachers," *English Journal* devoted another issue to "Women and Literature" in 1989. The focus of debate had not changed much, and, again, the rallying cry was gender balancing in relation to texts and the canon. Carlson elaborated on her earlier SLATE (Support for the Learning and Teaching of English) Starter Sheet with "Guidelines for a Gender-Balanced Curriculum in English, Grades 7-12." Attending to the needs of both male and female readers, she asserts that girls need to see themselves in contexts "true to their own lives" (30) and in a variety of circumstances, while boys need to experience women's voices (as Bloom proposed) to gain understanding of female concerns. Because our earliest curricula were developed for males (ministers, businessmen, etc.), the vestiges of training "blinders" that valued literature written by men about the male experience remain in place even for the most well-meaning reformers. As a result, many teachers do not even notice the different treatment of either gender in texts, or they fail to see the necessity for change because they believe the job of reforming the curriculum is over once a few female voices are in place. In addition, these training "blinders" leave many teachers at a loss to find "worthy" texts by women to replace what they already know and love (31). Carlson calls on those who care about gender equity in the curriculum to voice their concerns openly. She also provides some practical solutions: reading something by a woman every quarter, pairing male and female writers, analyzing student narratives for stereotypes, reviewing current films and video selections for English courses, raising the issue of "gender balancing" (32) in department meetings, sharing data with the school administration, and—as a last exhortation—persistence.

For the *English Journal*'s 1989 focus on gender issues, Lisa Moore outlined in further detail the process of pairing male and female writers in order to balance the curriculum. Because she believes an all-female curriculum is as biased as an all-male one, she sees such pairing as an appropriate response to achieving gender balance within the canon. Illustrating the effectiveness of such an approach through her experience teaching Walt Whitman with Emily Dickinson, as well as Maya Angelou with Richard Wright, Moore believes that reading pairs of male and female writers "illuminated both for young writers" (35) and allowed them to build their comparing/contrasting skills. In the end, she believes pairing of male and female writers offers different perspectives without judging one or the other.

"A Gradual Approach to Feminism in the American-Literature Classroom," written by Andrew P. Barker for the 1989 *English Journal* section on gender, provided the kind of strategies for achieving the balanced, non-threatening mainstreaming of women's issues and voices into the classroom which Ray and others called for. In his regular literature survey course, Barker introduces feminist concerns covertly and finds this to be a more effective learning environment that reaches a broad range of students. His first basic step, following in the model of other curriculum reformers before him, is to incorporate more women writers into his syllabus. Barker acknowledges the difficulty of adding women authors because it means cutting out old male favorites and may even mean overturning department or district requirements. But discovering someone like Kate Chopin can often make up for letting go of *Huckleberry Finn* (39). Barker also points out that some works by women that may have infiltrated the curriculum cover up or avoid feminist issues, and teachers may wish to seek out alternative selections. Dickinson's more feminine and socially acceptable poems are given as an example. Teachers, he cajoles, need not throw out the entire male-dominated canon. Instead, he states, they should confront the depiction of women in these texts, pointing out with their students both the misogynistic and the realistic portrayals there (40). Essentially, Barker claims, "feminist pedagogy involves a fundamental rethinking of the entire American 'canon'" (41). Finally, Barker suggests connecting these issues to students' lives, both by discussing elements of popular culture (MTV, advertisements) and by selecting works for which female students can act as authorities on the text, thus giving them a significant voice in class discussion and an opportunity to enlighten male readers (42).

Beyond the Canon

What students read in high school does not consist only of the classic assigned texts. Whether they are offered as selections for book reports, required for summer reading, made available for pleasure and leisure activities, or incorporated into a course's official curriculum, contemporary works written for adolescents play an additional role in students' reading lives.

Lois Stover sees a crucial connection between young adult literature and the changing gender roles in which students find themselves:

> In a society in which traditional roles for men and women continue to be redefined, abandoned, and reexamined, we need to emphasize certain goals of the literature program: a) the exploration of self, including the gendered self and b) the exploration of the relationships between the self and others.... By discussing young adult novels which explicitly or implicitly deal with sex role stereotyping or the breaking of traditional stereotypes, English teachers can help students reflect upon gender differences and their expectations, communication styles, responses to life's major issues and traumas, and...an individual's planning for the future. (94)

While Stover agrees with Carlson's premise that young readers, male and female alike, need to read works in which they find their own lives validated, she asserts that they also need to read works in which they find their lives and expectations challenged. In the available adolescent literature, female characters, according to recent studies, are represented in greater numbers, but they continue to be limited largely to traditional roles and contexts. To address these concerns of gender coverage, Stover calls for teachers to go beyond tokenism in their selection of texts to "represent in an honest way the contributions of women and nontraditional men to all aspects of our traditions and our contemporary life" (99). To integrate the curriculum effectively then, Stover suggests a number of options: (1) that teachers organize their courses around broad themes to "cross gender boundaries" (99); (2) that they exert a concerted effort with librarians to find young adult texts that present both genders realistically; (3) that teachers and students explore together the similarities and the differences of genders presented in the texts; (4) and that pairing male-oriented and female-oriented books, as Moore suggested with canonical works, might provide opportunities to discuss communication and relationship patterns among men and women, to examine "male" and "female" styles of writing, to question how gender affects an individual's world view, to expose the effects of stereotyping, and to consider gender-related implications of language (99). Stover believes that a new generation of young adult texts offers "some hope that men and women can learn from one another and help each other toward a more integrated, realistic sense of what it means to be oneself" (105).

Linda K. Christian-Smith, writing in 1987, however, was not so optimistic. Exploring the issues in "Gender, Popular Culture, and Curriculum: Adolescent Romance Novels as Gender Texts," Christian-Smith sees romance novels as a kind of underground curriculum for adolescent girls, paricularly given the proliferation by education publishers of new teen romance series similar to the popular Harlequin Romance series. As an underground curriculum instructing girls—especially with regard to intimate relationships—Christian-Smith finds romance novels "run counter to the realities [be they economic, social, or intellectual] of many women's and girls' actual lives," maintaining instead "traditional views of what should constitute those lives" (424). Alerting teachers to what she sees as a dangerous subversion of progress made in the real world concerning gender equity, Christian-Smith enjoins teachers to read romances with their students in order to discuss with them their inherent contradctions. Along with so many teachers before her, Christian-Smith also calls for a more balanced curriculum in order to show readers a broader range of female experience (424).

The "Organic" Canon and the "Organic" Curriculum

One of the reasons so much controversy has rained down upon English teachers, whether or not they subscribe to a gender-balanced curriculum, is because of a shared view that the canon of accepted, teachable, culturally literate works remains static. Thomas challenged this view in his paper, "The Organic Literary Canon: Its Role in American English Education," presented at the 1992 annual meeting of the National Council of Teachers of English. As his title suggests, Thomas redefines the canon as organic rather than static, as an open and changing list of recommended works that can embrace multiple perspectives and world views (4). To achieve such a canon, Thomas calls on teachers to read more and learn more outside their narrow specialties. He also reassures them that students have their entire school experience, spanning more than a decade, to be exposed to the wider canon (5). Eight years after Metha and Rothschild's criticism of English education courses, Thomas still finds the bastions of the old, static canon at the root of the resistance to change. Thus, he calls for a study of English education courses as a start toward reform (6-7). Embracing what Philip Phenix terms teaching an "array of realms of meaning" and Maxine Greene designates a "dialectic of freedom" (6), Thomas rejects the "limited visions generated by false centers" based on a traditional canonical perspective of white European males. That is not to say that Thomas rejects the contributions of all white males; rather, he advocates a kind of learning that goes beyond that single view to incorporate many views—men's and women's among them (8). He merely asks that the defenders of the canon move over and make room for the rest of the voices clamoring to be heard.

While the public debate over what students should read has made the news and rippled across the post-secondary academic landscape, teachers in the trenches of high school literature classes have remained largely unaffected. Yet the research on how students read, as well as how teachers teach, indicates that the needs of many students are not being met, merely because of gender. That even the most basic issues of gender equity and gender balancing with regards to the canon continue to be raised suggests that many of these concerns are simply being ignored. Almost every article included in this review seems to start from scratch: teach more books by women and here's how to do it.

While teachers in many school systems may not have the freedom they would like to choose their texts, they must surely have opportunities to challenge the *status quo* and engage in the curricular debate. Certainly, they can expand their own professional horizons and even make an impact on their classes at the xerox machine. They need to recognize that gender issues extend into the unofficial and underground reading curricula too.

English teachers seem to agree that students' lives are deeply affected by what they read. Thomas's proposal for an "organic" canon offers a solution with which teachers might grow more comfortable and from which students might be prepared for the more complex world of multiple perspectives—of men and/or women, of diverse cultures—in which they live. Perhaps Thomas's ideas might

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be expanded into an "organic curriculum"—opening doors to discussion and reading outside the canon—as a way to reach all readers from as many vantage points as possible. Neither reading nor teaching is a passive enterprise. If we recognize the need for reform, what are we waiting for?

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LITERATURE WITHOUT LECTURES—A DIFFERENT APPROACH

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This article suggests an alternative approach to the lecture format when teaching introductory literature classes, an approach that relies heavily on writing, group work, open-ended questions, and class discussion. When using this approach, the author has found introductory literature classes more interesting and dynamic for both instructor and students.

Recently, a sophomore in an introduction to literature class told me that she'd never read a complete book. She made it to college by reading a bare minimum—and this was a person from an upper middle-class family. This crystallized a problem I face in introductory literature classes. Many students have done little or no reading prior to entering college. Furthermore, many students have an intense dislike of reading, especially if the reading is related to the dreaded "E" word—English. Using journals, open-ended questions, and group work has proved especially beneficial in helping students overcome their fear and dislike of reading and in developing their critical abilities.

First, let me give a little background—a kind of personal teaching history in fifty words or less. When I started teaching introductory literature classes, I emulated instructors from undergraduate and graduate school, using the lecture as my primary vehicle of teaching, offering marvelous bits of information about authors and works, and occasionally asking a question of the class—to which I already had the right answer (you know, the "guess what the teacher is thinking" exercise). But I had to admit (when I was honest with myself) that even at my best as a lecturer, when I was wired, when the performance was exciting and flawless, there were still students with glazed eyes (or closed eyes—I'm not sure which is worse) betraying minds playing in distant fields or recovering from the previous night's party. I could not help asking myself if there were not a better way to teach a general introduction to literature.

When I modified my pedagogy and used a Socratic approach, conversation generally revolved around a few students, usually English majors, or that rare breed of student who was interested in learning for learning's sake. A few students tended to dominate discussions, while the majority of the class sat in silence, seemingly unconcerned and certainly uninvolved.

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In both the lecture format and the Socratic approach, the majority of students saw themselves as empty bowls to be filled, after which they would pour their learning back to me on an exam—a view of education generally fostered in our schools beginning with first grade. I, as the instructor, remained at the center of the classroom, and learning remained, in essence, a passive activity for most of the students most of the time. I was, in effect, propagating the type of passive education many have decried in recent years.

In an attempt to turn intellectual passivity into intellectual activity, I created an alternative approach for my introductory literature class. Much of the pedagogy I am about to describe is based on research and theory in composition that suggests the efficacy of both the decentralized classroom and the use of peer group work. I also took into account research showing the value of writing in the learning process. Two small texts further influenced me as I redesigned the course: David Bleich's *Readings and Feelings: An Introduction to Subjective Criticism* (NCTE, 1975) and Barrett Mandel's *Literature and the English Department* (NCTE, 1970). From this came a pedagogical design that relies heavily on peer group work, integrates copious amounts of writing, focuses attention on the text, and is highly accepting of various interpretations and responses to text.

Let me explain the nuts and bolts of this pedagogy in more detail. During the first class meeting, I inform a class that 75% of their grade will be based on a literature journal. Each journal entry has three parts. First, students must briefly summarize the literal meaning of the text we are reading. This literal summary can be quite revealing, illuminating problems that might otherwise go undetected. For instance, I had one student write that Walter Mitty, in the Thurber short story, had a girlfriend named Puppy Biscuit. Obviously, the student was having serious problems at the literal level of reading. Second, students look at what the text may be implying—what is below the purely literal level—and we develop some basic critical tools, usually within the context of the first few stories we read. Having a student discover—and relate to the class—the importance of narrative point of view is far more effective than any lecture I can give. Third, students respond to the text in terms of personal experiences and background. This is also the point where I encourage students to write down any questions they might have about the text. In this way, most students (there are always some exceptions, of course) have actively engaged the text prior to class.

Let me address one concern that I'm sure is bothering some of you—the amount of paperwork that journals generate and the need to read and grade those journals. I'm not a masochist, believe me. Here's what I've developed to handle the paper load and, yes, to prevent cheating. I collect journal entries each class meeting, so students can't go home and do a journal based on class discussion. At the end of each section in my literature class—short story, poetry, and drama—I return the journals and ask students to pick out their two best efforts. (By the time they do this the first time, they know I don't expect them to adhere to some party line, and that, in fact, I like to see original and creative thinking.) I grade the two journals the students pick out and cursorily check the others to see that requirements are being met. This makes for a manageable paper load, and it does a lot in terms of developing a positive attitude in students, who know they would not be docked for an "off" day. I like to reward students for their best work. I even hope that such rewards might encourage them to read again some day.

During the first or second class meeting, I break the class into four peer groups. Students normally move into their groups at the beginning of class, and I give each group a different question to answer about the day's reading assignment. Because the students have already written about the assignment at some length before class, they have a solid starting point from which to answer the question.

The questions I pose are quite important for the success of the group work. I give each group an open-ended question for which there is no obvious answer. The questions focus on ambiguities in the text, or require students to do some inferring, or push students to look at a text from an unusual point of view. The groups have twenty to thirty minutes to formulate their responses. In each class meeting, a different member of the group serves as a recording secretary, requiring more writing and close evaluation of that writing to make sure it is saying precisely what the group wants.

Let me give a specific example of how a question worked in a recent class. The text was Hemingway's "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber." I asked one group to consider whether Mrs. Macomber deliberately murdered Francis. The group split on their answer, half saying she did and half saying she did not, and the argument waxed heavy. The exciting thing for me was to watch as every member of the group participated, continually referring to the text to support their positions. A couple of the students even used pieces of paper to represent characters, placing them in positions on a desk based on their reading of the critical scene in the text, trying to gain further insights. In the end, the group could not agree and presented the class with two different responses. The entire class then thrashed over the question.

What I enjoy about this pedagogy is that prior to class, through the journals, and during peer group work in class, students are actively involved in creating meaning from a text. In the time the groups have to work on their questions, the room is alive with conversation, the hum peaking as positions or insights are proposed, subsiding as students chew and digest possibilities, rising again as further questions are posed and new possibilities explored. There is a constant rustle of turning pages as students pour over the text, reviewing, rereading, rethinking. For those whose paradigm of learning is the blank slate to be inscribed by the wise, knowledgeable instructor, or for those who want quiet classes in orderly rows, this approach would not work.

I do not participate in the group work. As soon as I try to sit with a group, discussion lapses, and all eyes are glued on me, the professor, who, after all, "must" have the right answer. So I sit quietly to one side of the room, listening and observing, occasionally offering background information if a group asks for it. As groups work, I am able to observe what is happening, to hear what students are saying, to watch critical thinking as it occurs.

For example, toward the end of one group discussion, Alice said to Stan, "Well, that shoots everything I wrote about today's assignment." She had completely rethought her position about the text during the group work. In another group, Debbie, in response to an assertion, said, "Yeah, but look at what it says on page 331," and the whole group reread the passage. When John made some particularly insightful comments about the meaning of the watch and compass in Faulkner's "The Bear," Jennifer said, "That's good. I never thought about it that way while I was reading." These are just a few examples of the conversations I hear regularly. I also notice that, with only a few exceptions, even the shyest, most reserved student eventually participates in peer group discussions.

I also find that student willingness to exchange ideas carries over when the whole class gathers to discuss a text, leading to some wonderfully dynamic exchanges. Early in the semester, Robert asserted that the Duchess in Browning's "My Last Duchess" was a floozy. This brought assent from Joe but a storm of protest from Debbie and Connie. In the course of achieving consensus, the class referred to the text continually, and I could see the class begin developing a sense of how important it is to read and reread in order to understand a text. Understanding the necessity of close reading, acquired in the context of a real discussion, carried over to discussions the rest of the semester and was, I think, far more effective than any lecture I could have given about the need to read closely. The need to read a text closely is also reinforced by the requirements of the journal, since a quick, superficial read will not produce enough material for a meaningful entry.

I remain far more in the background than is normally the case in most literature classes, while the students are out front, actively engaged in creating meaning. I serve primarily as a resource person, though I will toss a question or observation into the ring of discussion if I think it appropriate. I try not to dominate, though there are times when I have to bite my tongue so that I do not jump into a discussion and give my (the right?) interpretation. I keep in mind the comment one eager student made when we read "The Cask of Amontillado." He said that he had gone to the library and found twenty-four different interpretations of the story. Good stories have that quality, don't they?

When I began using this approach, I wondered if those ideas and insights I had into the literature we were reading would ever become part of the discussion if I did not dominate the class, did not enlighten my students in guru fashion. I should have worried less. Given a supportive atmosphere, students continually surprise me with their insights. Of course, not everything I might think important is mentioned, but then, what is ignored is probably not important in the lives of my 19-year-old students. A balance is struck. Some of my pet ideas are not discussed, but I am willing to trade that for a lively class discussion where people are actively exploring a text and creating meaning in the context of their own lives—students becoming independent readers and writers. To frame this in terms of a recent buzz word, I think this approach empowers students.

How do students respond? Quite positively. Many of them put substantial effort into their written responses, and that effort pays dividends as students become more critical—using insights gained in class discussions to inform later written work. Peer group discussions and class discussions seldom lag. There is almost always a palpable level of energy in the classroom. It is rare to see glazed eyes or nodding heads.

The positive results of this pedagogy come, in great part, from the journals done before class. It is pretty hard for a student not to think about a text when writing about it. This thinking flows over into group and class discussion. But I would also suggest that even without the journals—with just the questions and the group work—literature classes made up primarily of non-English majors can be a more vigorous and invigorating experience—for student and teacher alike.

I also think part of the reason for the energy in the class—for the amount of active discussion—is my willingness to accept alternative views when looking at a text. Almost all my students begin the class thinking there is only one "right" way to read a text. Most come from schools where there was only one way to read literature—the teacher's way—and woe unto the person who deviated from the teacher's interpretation. My willingness to accept a variety of interpretations helps students begin to see that a text may be read more than one way—that a text may have a variety of facets—a fact I was never sure students understood when I served primarily as a lecturer-examiner. I also think the stress on close reading mitigates against the view that any interpretation is okay. When a member of one class presented an idea and supported it with the comment "because that's the way I feel," the class refused to accept his "feelings." They wanted supporting evidence from the text. I like such critical thinking.

Before closing, let me address one question a colleague has raised. Is a lecture ever appropriate? Yes. I use lectures at various times during the semester, especially early on and when introducing a new genre. I also find that students respond positively to mini-lectures of five to ten minutes where I introduce a writer or give some cultural background to help illuminate a piece we'll be reading for the following class. The type of lecture I find completely off the mark is best illustrated by one I saw a colleague give. He spent an hour discussing caesura in *Paradise Lost* to a group of sophomores.

Do journals, questions, group work, and discussion succeed all the time? To a degree—yes. Of course there are still classes, still days, when nothing much happens, and I wonder if everyone is brain dead. But most of the time, I have found this approach to teaching literature rewarding, and most of my students seem to agree. I go into my classes with anticipation, wondering what insights my students will bring, knowing that I will often leave the class with some new perspectives. Best of all, by the end of the semester, I am able to see quite a few of my students exit the class as thoughtful, independent readers. I like that.

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The Role of Story Schema in the Understanding of James Joyce's "Araby"

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This study was conducted to explore the possibility that students at a small, historically Black university might reject "Araby" because it is set in an unfamiliar culture. More important than the role of cultural familiarity and prior knowledge were students' feelings of frustration, attributed to their struggle to internalize Joyce's unfamiliar text schema.

"It was stupid. It was boring. Rip it out of the book!" was Rhomme's animated reply when I asked her about the short story, "Araby", by James Joyce. While her response may be an exaggeration, it represents the feelings many students expressed about this often-taught short story. "Araby" is included in our anthology under the general heading of "Innocence and Experience," a collection of stories in which adolescents are grappling with problems faced by most young people. But for many students like Rhomme, the story is an abysmal failure, one which she cannot relate to and one which she does not enjoy.

Purpose and Scope of this Study

While teaching "Araby," I noted students' consistent frustration and displeasure with the story, while other selections dealing with common problems of adolescence were received with enthusiasm. I wondered if the displeasure displayed for "Araby" could be explained by the fact that students at my small, historically Black university rejected the story because it takes place in an unfamiliar culture: late nineteenth century Ireland, a culture steeped in Roman Catholicism and unfamiliar mores. This study is an attempt to explore that possibility.

Although my original intention was to examine the responses of these students to "Araby" and to study the role of cultural familiarity and prior knowledge in the understanding and appreciation of the story, I soon realized that the answer was not so simple. I found that I had to also consider the students' internalized text schemas and the ways those schemas affected their understanding and appreciation of fiction. Cultural familiarity, while certainly a factor in understanding, was not as crucial as the feelings of frustration students experienced as they struggled to "tune in" to Joyce's text schema.

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A Definition of Text or Story Schema

Schema is generally understood to be the mental framework employed by readers as they attempt to construct meaning from a text. The role of prior experience in the formation of individual schema has been discussed by psychologists, reading researchers, and literary critics. David Rumelhart, a reading researcher, defines schema as a data structure for representing the "generic concepts" stored in memory (2). Perry W. Thorndyke refers to schemas when he suggests that the information a reader can recall depends on the organization of a story. He contends that the recall probability is a function of the amount of inherent plot structure in the story (78).

William Henk and John Helfeldt, in an article in the *Thirty-Sixth Yearbook of the National Reading Conference*, suggest that readers engage in a form of "selective encoding" of incoming information. They say that familiar schemas are used as a framework for assimilating new data, and when specific information is not provided or known, readers will fill the slots of their own schemas with "default values," that is, known concepts that are consistent with the activated schema (143).

A Description of the Study

All student participants were volunteers; six were freshman basic writers, six were freshman non-basic writers, and six were sophomore former basic writers. All performed read-aloud protocols, followed by one-on-one conferences. Each protocol consisted of reading the story aloud into a tape recorder and recording their thoughts as much as possible as they read. In addition, at strategic points in the story, there were interval questions which asked readers to predict, explain, or divulge their impressions of characters or the plot. Readers performed a practice protocol and then were sequestered in a small, quiet study room for the actual protocol taping. After all 18 had completed protocols, readers participated in small group discussions. They also completed questionnaires, and each student concluded the session with a one-on-one interview with the researcher.

Results of the Study

Because I had taught "Araby" for several semesters, I fully expected that some readers would not like the story; and, because my university is a historically Black institution, I was expecting to find that "Araby" was a problem because of the unfamiliar culture it portrayed. What I found was not what I expected. For most of the readers in the study, the major problem with "Araby" was not the culture which it portrays, but the way it is written. Students were confused by what seemed to them to be irrelevant passages and descriptions and, especially, by the "jumping around" of the narrative. It was not clear where the story was headed. The story schema violated their expectations and though a few were able to reconcile Joyce's text schema with their own, many were not. As a result, reactions of most readers ranged from mild annoyance to outrage.

I was prepared for the comments that the story is boring, irrelevant, and confusing. To put it in the words of readers in my English 103 class, "It was stupid. What was the point?" But the protocols of Holly and Tim, who were among the first readers, directly addressed the structure of the story and pointed to the role of text schema in the difficulty students had understanding and enjoying it. As more readers performed the "Araby" protocol, I looked for additional comments that might confirm that the confusion was based on the way the story was structured; post-protocol questions inquired about the role of schema in student understanding and enjoyment.

The Story "Araby"

"Araby" opens with a description of the street, then discusses the former tenant of the house, a dead priest. The story actually begins with the third paragraph where images of colors, and of light and darkness, are intermixed with images of boys playing, and with suggestions of the narrator's adolescent "crush" on Mangan's sister. The story then relates the boy's odyssey to a bazaar at Araby and ends with his realization that he has acted foolishly, as he sees himself "driven and derided by vanity," his eyes "burn[ing] with anguish and anger" (31).

Responses of Readers to "Araby"

Many readers' comments cited Joyce's story schema as a major source of confusion or annoyance. Tim's comments clearly indicate that he did not enjoy the story; the descriptions annoyed him. In his protocol he said:

> This story. It's like these people don't have any television, so this is their entertainment. I like to get to the details like for this day and age, but I'm not really worried about the color of the bottom of his shoes. I'm not worried about everything that he feels, details like that. I can know what is going on in his mind by his actions.

At the end of his protocol, Tim said, "No, I didn't like the story. There were still too many details and stuff like that, added scenes to the story that weren't needed."

In his exit interview, Tim said he didn't like "Araby" because "I couldn't figure out where the plot was going. I like a story that goes straight to the plot—so you know what you're going to read." He pointed out that the first two paragraphs were misleading. He said, "I expected the story to be about a dead priest."

Early in her protocol, Holly complained that the story was hard to follow because it "switched subjects":

> It is very hard to really understand it because it talks about so many different things. It has switched subjects in every sentence. It goes to a different subject or talks about something that's totally irrelevant to the last. It is really difficult to understand at this point.

Holly also found the first two paragraphs difficult or unclear. She found these passages confusing. She said, "It threw you off. We never knew who the speaker was."

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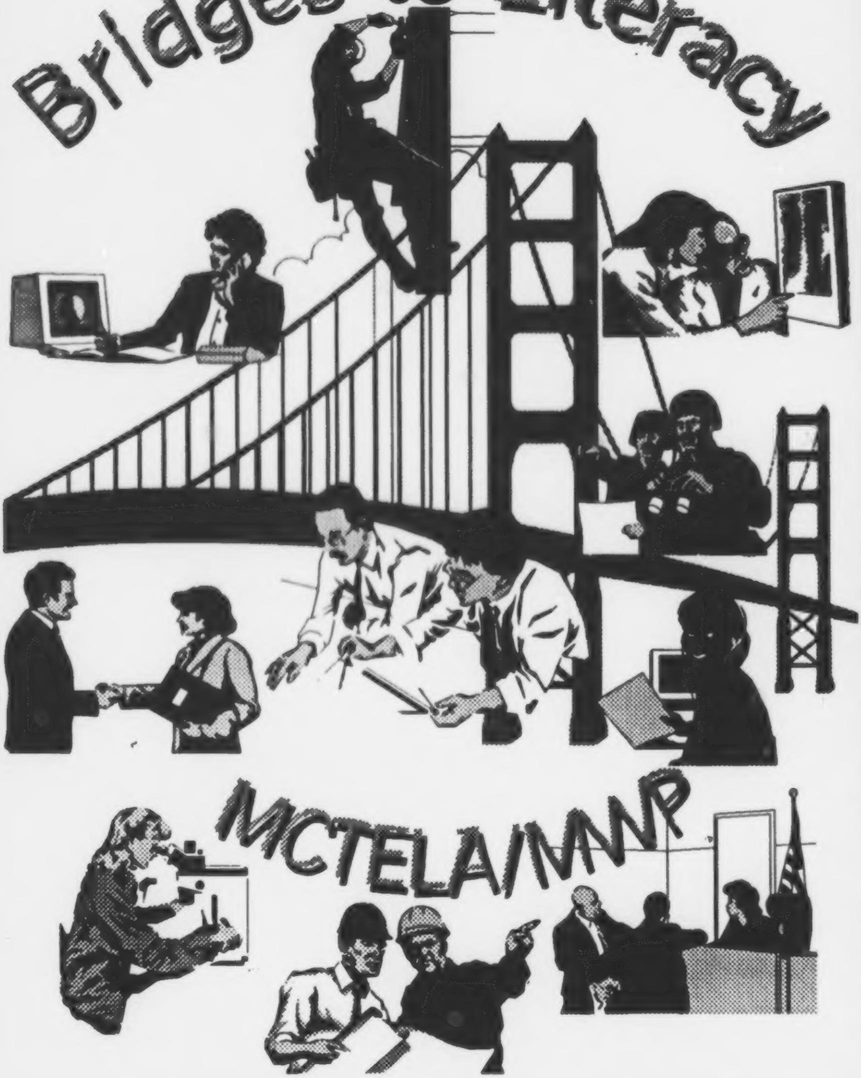

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Rhomme tried hard to understand the story. Early in the protocol, she said, "I really don't understand the point of this story. I mean it's still not getting to the point except that this little boy likes his friend's older sister." Her annoyance continues as she is asked to predict the course and ending of the story based on what she has read so far. "Well, I really can't do that since I just said I don't really understand where this story is going."

When asked about "Araby" during her exit interview she replied:

> Why do we have to talk about "Araby?" I hate "Araby." I hated it. It was boring. Rip it out of the book. It was weak and pitiful. . . First the story was in left field, then it was in right field, then it was . . . I don't know where, but it didn't make any sense. Then it ended up out in the field again.

For half the readers in this research, the structure or schema,—described as "jumping around," "too many details," and "never coming together,"—was a source of confusion and frustration as they attempted to determine where the story was headed and then to arrive at an understanding of the story.

Readers' comments indicate that they expected the early passages of a story to set the scene, to tell the reader what to expect. The beginning passages of "Araby" do not conform to that commonly held schema. Readers expected that the beginning of a story would prepare them for what would follow, and "Araby" did not. Many were confused or annoyed by the story's introduction which led them to expect the story to be about the dead priest, but it was not.

Not All Readers Complained of Joyce's Schema

However, not all readers found Joyce's schema confusing. Readers such as John and Dominique seemed able to reconcile the introduction, which discussed the dead priest, and the story of the boy's actual experience. I asked John about the first paragraphs which had been cited by many as confusing, and he said that the passage had not been a problem for him; he said he just did not like the story. He continued, "I didn't care for the writer's style, but I also didn't like the story. It did show realism, on the boring side, but realism. It could have been interesting, but it wasn't."

Dominique, however, had only good things to say about "Araby" throughout his protocol, in our conversations, and during the group discussions. He never appeared confused or troubled over the plot. When asked to choose a confusing or difficult passage, he said that there were none. I asked him in his exit interview about the opening two paragraphs. He said, "That part wasn't confusing. I just figured out that was what he saw."

Other Schema Violations in "Araby"

"Boy Meets Girl"

As I read and listened to "Araby" protocols, I was struck by the fact that half of the readers expected the boy and girl to meet at the bazaar, even though the narrator stated in the story that the girl could not go because she had a retreat in her convent. During the group discussions, I asked about this discrepancy. Several said that they knew she could not attend, but they had hoped that somehow she would still get there. Others said they didn't realize she couldn't attend, possibly because they failed to understand the restrictions the convent retreat might impose on her.

Because half of the readers expected the boy to meet the girl at the bazaar, in spite of the story's statement that she could not, it seems that many internalized schemas of "young love" stories include a "boy meets girl at the fair" scenario. Perhaps reader expectations of a story can override statements in the text that say otherwise.

Preferred Endings

During exit interviews, readers were asked what sorts of endings they preferred in a story. Half of the readers said they preferred an ending which clearly resolves the story. Both Dominique and Eschlyn preferred endings that made a point or had a moral. As Dominique said, "Endings are satisfying when they make a point, something you can think about. I get annoyed at endings when you wonder what the person is talking about. 'Araby' left you wondering what happened next."

Eschlyn expressed the same idea when she said, "I like endings that are happy or teach a lesson. I did not like 'Araby' because it left me hanging." Rhomme, too, expressed preference for endings which permit the reader to know exactly what a character's final actions are. She said, "It's OK if they [the endings] are unhappy, just so you know what happened. You need to know there was a beginning, middle, and an end."

Discussion: Expectations and Endings

By their own admission, most readers brought to their reading a story schema which provided a clearly defined beginning or introduction in which the reader is prepared for the narrative; the narrative itself, which includes some conflict or action; and a conclusive ending, one in which the conflict is resolved or in which a lesson is learned.

For many readers in this study, "Araby" presented a mismatch with their internalized text schemas. "Araby" was described by readers as jumping around, switching subjects, containing too many details; and, as Monet said, "It's just like it was talking about a whole bunch of different stuff, and it never came together at the end." For these readers, the schema mismatch resulted in confusion and annoyance.

Inherent in the internalized "young love" schemas of half of the readers in this research is the idea that, despite the odds, the boy and girl will meet—in this case, at the bazaar. In spite of the passage in the story which states that the girl could not attend, the notion that they would meet was pervasive. It seems readers were engaged in "selective encoding" of their own schemas with "default values" (Henk and Helfeld 143).

For many, "Araby" violated all their expectations: that is, they expected a story with a clear introduction, an action narrative with a conflict, and an ending which resolves the conflict, or which contains a message or theme. On all counts, these students felt that "Araby" fell short.

The Role of Cultural Familiarity and Prior Knowledge in Understanding Fiction: The Culture of "Araby" as a Factor in Understanding the Story

In her post-protocol conversation, Tasha admitted that much of the story confused her. She said that she thought the girl was a nun, and she was confused by the religious references. She said she did not expect the story to be so hard, and because she did not like it, she found herself getting sleepy.

Larry said he felt "boggled" by some of the references, citing the dead priest and the mention of a "florin." Monet said that she was aware that the "time frame" of "Araby" was not familiar. She talked about it in her exit interview: "Yes, the culture was a problem, but the language was the real problem, and the boring story—what was the point, anyway?"

However, for Jeannine, the setting and culture did not present a problem. She said: "I read a lot, usually a novel a week, and I try to read stories about different cultures, so I'm used to that sort of thing." Alex admitted he was not familiar with Catholicism, but added, "I figured out what I needed to know to understand the story."

When asked if the unfamiliar culture of Catholic Ireland in 1900 was the main cause of the difficulty in understanding the story, only three felt it was the "main" problem. Seven readers who admitted that the unfamiliar culture was at least a factor said the real problem with "Araby" was the boring story, the outdated language, and the jumping around. Fred said it this way: "The story was boring. It had very little action. The author should have used easier words."

It should be noted that the language of "Araby," often referred to by students as confusing or difficult, can certainly be considered a reflection of Joyce's culture, and the references to places, events, and objects which were unfamiliar are a reflection of that culture. References to "litanies," "chalice," "odours . . . from the ashpits," and "retreat . . . in her convent" were often unrecognized by these readers.

Frank Smith observes that "I can only make sense of the world in terms of what I know already. Anything I cannot relate to the theory of the world in my head will not make sense to me. I shall be bewildered" (55). Smith also notes that each kind of text has its own genre schemes which distinguish it from other kinds of texts. He says, "Genre schemes help readers and writers by giving them a basis for predicting what a text will be like" (63).

Judith Langer points out that constructing meaning is a function of "the interrelationship among a variety of complex forces" and that the act of meaning construction cannot be described by a linear model (74).

It is clear that a variety of forces are at work as a reader attempts to make meaning of a passage or a story. For some readers in this study, a lack of prior knowledge and cultural familiarity were factors in causing confusion or antagonism, but for most, the cultural issues could be "figured out." For most who found the story difficult or unpleasant, the unconventional story schema was the primary obstacle to understanding or enjoying the story.

It should also be noted that college students are not the only readers who have found "Araby" to be disconcerting. In an article in *Poetics*, George Dillon observed that stories that begin with settings describing the place and characters of the story are among the most traditional. He goes on to discuss the "tricky" text schema in "Araby":

> The problem in sizing up "Araby" does not have to do with narratorial presence/absence but with the kinds of guidance the narrator gives (or can be taken to give). The first paragraph appears to be a traditional setting rendered by an articulate, and somewhat playful narrator. . . . A shift occurs, however, when the narrator begins speaking of himself in the next paragraph. (176)

Dillon further points out that the narrator has "led us into this initial schema only to give us the experience of it breaking down" (177). He concludes that the author has, in a sense, misled the reader as he initially guides us through "an erroneous view of the story, and that, in a sense, tricks us" (178).

As Dillon's analysis illustrates, readers in this research were not alone in their struggle to reconcile conflicting schemas in the early passages. Students' comments reflect attempts to determine where the story was going, and they reveal their frustration when they realized the story was not unfolding as they expected.

Conclusions and Summary

In summary, "Araby" was difficult or unpleasant for these readers for a variety of reasons:

- The opening two paragraphs were a source of confusion to many. Readers were unable to establish who was telling the story and what the story was going to be about.
- The plot lacked overt action, and the story was considered by many to be boring. With the exception of the train ride, much of the narrative involved detailed description and dwelled on the boy's thoughts.
- The language and setting, portraying an unfamiliar culture, contributed to the difficulty in understanding "Araby." Religious references, along with descriptions of scenes characteristic of life in the late 1800s, were unfamiliar and confusing to some.
- Most participants did not consider the unfamiliar culture to be the main cause of their confusion. They were confused or annoyed by

Joyce's story schema which conflicted with their expectations of the story.

- The ending was seen by many as inconclusive, with no clear lesson or moral.
- In addition to the schema violations cited above, many readers were misled by the expectation of "boy meets girl" in the story. When they did not meet, some were further confused.

Observations and Comments

While the purpose of this study was to examine the role of cultural familiarity and text schema compatibility in the understanding of fiction, I can speculate on the causes of student frustration with an unfamiliar text schema. I can speculate about expectations of students based on their exposure to television programming rich with situation comedies, cartoons, and dramas which faithfully present stories with the traditional schema of introduction-story-conclusion, and tidy conclusions which tie up loose ends, resolve all conflicts, and often present a simple lesson. That, however, is speculation and perhaps is a topic for additional research.

However, we, as classroom teachers and experienced readers, need to consider the limited experience our students may have with literary reading. Before we decry the sorry intellectual state of our students, we might consider how we can help them to better understand that which we easily understand.

Marilyn Adams and Bertram Bruce warn us that "we can only learn through language that which in some sense we already know." They add that a major determinant of a text's comprehensibility is the "goodness of the match" between the reader and the text (14).

Henk and Helfeldt tell us that familiar schemata are used as a framework for assimilating new data. They warn that when specific information is not provided, is not known, or is not familiar, the reader will fill slots of the schema with "default values," known concepts that coincide with the known schema (143). John Black and Colleen M. Seifert point out that the reader will have difficulty when the schema of the reader does not "match" the schema of the story.

It is not "giving the story away" to help readers by discussing the structure or schema of a story, to find out what students consider satisfying, and what kinds of experiences they may have in their own literary reading. I have found that a longer pre-reading discussion can be helpful to me as well as to students. I have learned a great deal by listening to what students know and by exploring the schemas they possess as a result of their reading, their television viewing, and their own life experiences. The value of pre-reading discussions cannot be over emphasized.

I believe it is also okay that students not like all our literary selections. We in the profession certainly have our own preferences, for it is because of our own preferences that we have continued to select "Araby" over the years. Students need not treasure each literary selection we choose, and we should make an effort to include selections which students will enjoy.

As a result of this study I realize that we have much to learn from our students if we are willing to take the time to ask and to listen; and when we truly listen, students are gratified that we value their opinions and that we are not horrified that some stories may be more difficult or less enjoyable than others. If we place ourselves in the position of the less experienced reader, we can help our students appreciate readings which may be initially difficult. Stories such as "Araby" can be unraveled with care to reveal to readers what we knew was there all the time.

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I'M TELLING!

(A THIRD GRADE GIRL'S REPORT TO THE SCHOOL OFFICE)

Carol F. Peck
Poet-in-the-Schools, Artists-in-Education for the Maryland State Arts Council

"There's a boy with his head in the snow!"
Her tone was indignantly grand,
"We're *not* s'posed to *touch* it, you know!"

Her face had the triumphant glow
Of a matron with firm upper hand
Over boys with their heads in the snow.

She turned, with her witness in tow,
And flung back her firm reprimand:
"We're *not* s'posed to *touch* it, you know!"

Her dictates are all in a row
For a future full upright and bland.
And that boy with his head in the snow?

Thank heavens he never will grow
To a man with his head in the sand.
(It's too late to touch *him*, you know.)

Bless you free spirits who show
The wisdom to know how to stand,
Like that boy, with your heads in the snow...
We all touch each other, you know.

NOTE: This villanelle was inspired by an incident I observed during an Artists-in-Education visit to Myersville Elementary School, Myersville, MD. Later, I dedicated it to the Tau Omega chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, English Honor Society, University of Maryland University College, on the occasion of their first annual banquet, April 25, 1992.

Carol F. Peck has been a member of Poet-in-the-Schools (Artists-in-Education for the Maryland State Arts Council) since 1970, and a lecturer in Creative Writing for the adult education program at the University of Maryland University College since 1970. She works as a hospice volunteer helping the terminally ill to write histories, poems, or whatever they wish to leave behind. Peck is also the author of *From Deep Within: Poetry Workshops in Nursing Homes*, numerous musical dramas for children to perform, and many poems and articles in literary and educational journals.

CONFESSIONS OF AN EX-PODIOPHILE

Carol A. Downey
Northwest Area High School, Pennsylvania

A podiophile clings to and actively uses a podium for 180 school days. This individual becomes neurotic and disoriented if the podium is not placed properly or somehow misfunctions. I was once a podiophile. Eighteen years ago, I was blessed with getting my very own podium. I was a new teacher, and it was quite an honor to receive it. The podium was a hand-me-down, but quite appealing to look at. The surface was well-sanded and oakish in color. Every morning I would place my notes and necessary paraphernalia on my very own podium. Then it happened one day in speech class—a burly male named Jason was delivering his oration but leaned too hard on the front of the podium. It fell, crashed, and roared to the floor. I was mortified! My most treasured possession was now in shambles. I lost my identity. No longer could I envision myself as the silver-tongued orator who knows all and cures all educational woes. My trademark of grasping the podium, staring at the back of the room, pursing my lips, and clenching my teeth was gone. I was even beginning to develop that venerable hunched look from leaning over the podium. Gloom overtook me, for I, as Gena Lengel puts it, was a "podiophile," slave to the speaker's stand.

I garnered enough strength to ask the strapping youth if he was okay. Inwardly, I didn't really care because he had ruined my professional treasure. He broke my podium, my most treasured possession, the symbol of my teacherhood. How was I going to teach now? What student would believe I had all the answers without that podium to prop up my authority? I began to ponder the many days that I dictated notes, did grammar review, and conducted discussions from that implement I loved so much.

Without it, I now had to become one of "THEM." I began to walk into the rows, I used effective hand motions, and I even participated in what they were doing. It was like the "dawning of Aquarius." I became rejuvenated. Groups began to form in my classroom, interaction occurred, and I even began to write with my students.

There were and are days, however, that I miss my podium. But, the activity and the sharing that have replaced it far outweigh my longing for that beloved lump of wood.

I have been walking the halls of my high school to see if there are remnants of teachers with podium desires. To my astonishment, there are. What

Carol A. Downey teaches at Northwest Area High School in Shickshinny, Pennsylvania. She enjoys constructing writing activities for high school and college students. Downey had an activitity published in a 1994 issue of *Exercise Exchange*, a national publication, and an activity recently published in *Notes Plus*, the quarterly to the *English Journal*.

made me reminisce about the podium was a news clip I had seen on podium. Lo and behold, there he was standing behind the implement of my earlier desires! This particular educator was smiling, which strays from an expression which departs from the usual podium participant. I could tell that he was not a disciple of Jonathan Edwards as I had been. As I was drinking my morning tea and watching this clip, I openly verbalized, "Get rid of that antiquated thing!" I have to be careful with such sudden outbursts because my husband does not share nor understand my podium passion.

At school, students complain to me about podiophiles. I tell them that for one to get rid of the podium, it has to be a voluntary metamorphosis or it will not work. One student stated, "That guy is like dazed when he speaks from the podium." I told him not to speak negatively about his teacher because he probably is "in love" with this instructional tool.

I decided to interview teachers and students about podiums and the use of them. In speech class one day I posed the question, "Should teachers use the podium to conduct class?" Lori, one of my speech students said, "There is more action in class without the podium, and the teacher on the move keeps students awake." I liked that answer. Jeremy emphatically stated, "No podium—too authoritative." The image of Jonathan Edwards returned. Amy stated, "Without the podium, teachers talk directly to you." I could not find anyone in this class who valued the podium as an instructional tool.

I continued to ask teachers about using a podium. This is where answers differed. One science teacher stated that he finds the podium to be too confining. He prefers moving around as it promotes good rapport and functions as a disciplinary tactic. He stated, "If you move near a problem child, he is less likely to act up." I liked his thoughts about proximics. A history teacher, though, stated that he finds the podium to be a real help. He felt that he could keep his notes and gear handy. That brought memories for me.

Podiophilia is not as widespread now as it was in the 70s. But, remnants of the disease still exist. I now yearn for the day that podiums will be totally defunct and sold at auctions or flea markets as collectors' items. To those still using podiums, clenching their teeth, and pursing their lips, I hope these educators will give up the podium and move into the mainstream by becoming more actively involved. Revamping lessons must occur; however, class participation will increase. By stepping away from the podium, one's creativity may blossom. But, it still makes me sad sometimes to reminisce about this beloved bygone instructional tool.

Maryland Showcase for Young Writers

This showcase features the writing of young people in the fourth through eighth grades. The writing was submitted by teachers as follows. ***Anne Arundel County:*** Magothy River Middle School — William Bracone, Bonnie Howe, and Jackie Sachs; ***Baltimore County:*** General John Stricker Middle School — Peter A. Brown, and Warren Elementary School — Barbara Kneip, Anita Lumsden, and Karen Williams; ***Baltimore City:*** Booker T. Washington Middle School — Nichelle Broomer, Danielle Dunn, Douglas Fireside, Sylvia Hebron, Alexander Ross, and Helen Wright, and Highlandtown Elementary School, P.S. 215 — Laura Menin; ***Garrett County:*** Accident Elementary School — Sheila Russell; ***Montgomery County:*** Carol F. Peck, Poet-in-the-Schools, Artists in Education program for the Maryland State Arts Council; ***Queen Anne's County:*** Sudlersville Middle School — Betty Elburn and Mary-Beth Goll.

*MCTELA and the Maryland English Journal staff thank Mary-Beth Goll for her years of dedicated service as the **Maryland Showcase for Young Writers** editor.*

Stesha Bacoat, Grade 4

THE MAGICAL EAGLE

I am the Magical Eagle
I eat bushes and chocolate flavored grass,
Anything that's green and sweet;
I don't wear feathers; I wear magic scarves
That change different colors
        in different weather.
I live in a colorful mountain that is very safe;
I move by winking from one place to another;
I can make different animal sounds;
My friends are other kinds of birds,
And I help homeless birds;
I fear hunters, zookeepers, and scientists;
I eat and make other birds happy all day.
I dream that some people who are hunters
Would put down their guns
And leave us birds in peace.
I go to my relatives and spend two weeks
        with them;
I am the Magical Eagle.

Teachers of kindergarten through grade eight, please send future **Maryland Showcase for Young Writers** submissions to Carol F. Peck, 14910 Brownstone Drive, Burtonsville, MD 20866-1849.

Alec Zirkenbach, Grade 6

A View from My Window

As I looked out my window,
I saw a flock of blackbirds.
By the millions they flew together
like a black snake
slithering through the bright blue sky.

You could hear the wings
pounding together through the air.
Softly at first in the distance,
the sound came steadily louder,
and closer like a train.

I stepped outside to get a closer view.
They split into two groups
but came back together.
As they landed in the field,
they formed their own black sea
while searching for food on the ground.

The bus came, and I had to go to school.
On the bus I looked out the window
and could see that the sound of the motor
frightened the birds into flight.
They seemed to race with us,
but then disappeared into the thick dark woods.

At school I heard a familiar sound.
I looked out the window and saw
a black cloud of birds covering the light of the sun.
I could soon hear
that they were gone.
As migration ends and the birds return,
I will be there to look out my window.

Tom Crozier, Grade 5

My Onery Dog

Four weeks ago, I got a black Lab puppy. He's very hyper! If you exit the room alone, he will proceed to get your shoes and dart around with his tail wagging as you chase him.

At night, if you advance into the darkness, you will be attacked by a dark shadow. When you are walking, he will do anything you do—like stopping or walking. When you are traveling by car, he usually gets sick and throws up.

He's one onery pup!

Laurie Davidson, Grade 8

RABBITS

As I come in
looking around me I see rabbits

The fast, small brown creatures
that listen in the quiet,

Eyes that don't move
and when they sense trouble

Swiftly run away.

I see the baby
huddled by the mother

Scared to move
of what to do.

The look in her eyes
hoping her mother will always stay

By her side.

Travis Smith, Grade 6

THE FALL

It was cold and frightening
That horrid afternoon,
I peered down off the high old bridge
And saw the stony ground!

The men had looked right at me
As the wind made a whistling sound;
"It's your turn," said the men,
Then pushed me toward the ground.

I would not make it, I had thought,
The rock is much too close!
"Oh God!" I said in a loud shout,
"If I make it, I won't boast."

The men who pushed me off the top
Said, "Hey, it could be worse.
We could have been so really mean
And not have warned you first."

The wind was blowing at my face,
But there was not a snap—
At the last most second,
My bungee pulled me back!

Marshae Smith, Grade 6

THE COLORS OF GYM

The nice textures of turning
a green and white rope;
Bouncing an orange and black ball
across the smooth and soothing
orange-colored floor of the gym;
The sound of a green and white rope
tapping the floor
and rushing through the cool and
smothering breeze,
As dancing on the hard orange floor;

It feels as though millions of people
are watching
And you are just doing your thing
and showing your stuff,
And they're just watching;
Vibrations of the teachers in a
cold gray sweat;
The sound of people singing songs
is the color of yell!

Peggy Robinson, Grade 6

A PERSON'S DREAMS

It's not enough to have a dream.
unless you are willing to live up to it.

It's not enough to know a legend.
unless you are willing to tell it.

It's not enough to join the crowd
to be challenged and accepted.

I must be true to my dreams
even if I'm turned down and rejected.

It's not enough to be in love
unless the one is true to your heart,

But you must be brave and fearless in life
even if it hurts and tears you apart.

Karen Robertson, Grade 5

WHAT IS WHITE?

Is white a dove calling,
or is white swans swimming in a lake?

Is white the snowflakes
that blanket the earth?

Or is white the pillow fights
you have at sleepovers?

Is white the icing
you lick off a cake?

Is white a color?

Is white invisible?

Or is white a new bright day?

What do you think of
when you think of white?

Mojisola Awosika, Grade 8

I AM A SLEDGE HAMMER

I am a sledge hammer,
Because I am strong
and I always break through hard problems;

I am a dandelion,
Because I shine bright as the sun;

I am a tuba, strong and loud;

I am the Discovery Channel,
Because I discover new things all my life;

I am a lion,
Because "my powerful word shall be heard;"

I am a sapphire,
Because fire burns deep in my soul;

I am spring,
Because I am cool and mellow;

I am a priceless vase,
Because my life has no tag.

Shenica Smith, Grade 6

WHAT I'VE KNOWN

I've known freedom,
Freedom of speech to lift our voice
To go where no one has gone before,
To be free of the world,
just from one speech;
I smell the scents of our people's blood
Saying, "No more guns."
I hear our people calling us, wanting to be free;
I taste the blood of our people's blood
being killed and hated;
I feel our people's flesh run through their souls
as I listen to their heartbeat dying;

No more guns and no more hate;
Let the land be free;
This is my freedom of speech,
And this is my dream.

Michelle Henderson, Grade 6

OLIVE GREEN

Olive green is my home in Spain,
bursting with fun fiestas;
It is the shadows cast on the ocean
as I fish for large trout
in the evening dusk;
It is the anchovy-like taste
of the Spanish green olive;
It is the bumpy conifer leaf of the
late Cretaceous Period;
It is the silent waving green seaweed
at the dark ocean floor;
It is the voice of the trees in the wind
in a flourishing forest;
It is the life in my father's eyes,
The smell of my kitchen when cooking
olive oil on an early morn;
Olive green is my world bursting with
color, peace, love, and joy.

Julie Morganstern, Grade 7

THE SORROWS OF A TREE

The
tree stands surrounded
yet the weeping blades of grass
leave it desolate and alone. Vines climb up
and up, clinging to the scarred bark like a frightened
baby to its mother. The sky frames the tree with a threat of
a storm. Rain pours down, drooping the leaves like sad puppy
ears. A hole starts small and then opens up pulling you into
the sullen darkness with frightening suddenness. Branches
hang like limp noodles with nothing to look forward to,
Shade pulls on the limbs, weighing them down with
an unbearable sadness. A deserted wooden swing
almost touches the ground, moving with the lightest
breeze. The leaves are green, but seem an
almost eerie blue in the fading twilight.
Patches
of long
gray
bark
peel
away
from
the
trunk.

The ground goes on and on forever, never reaching its destination.

William Amey, Grade 4

THE SON OF THE QUIET RAIN

I am a rainy, dreary day;
I wake up early;
I am the morning mist;
I'm the frog jumping from lily pad to lily pad;
I am the rain dripping from leaf to leaf,
running from branch to branch like a squirrel,
The taste of the spring water,
The mud running through my toes;
I am the dream of the quiet water;
The sky starts a quiet cry
where I lie.

Rachel Mech, Grade 4

THE COLLECTIONS OF THE WORLD

I have a collection to brighten my days;
The sunset for when I am alone,
Church bells to sing me to sleep,
The clouds in the sky to soften my fall,
The warm sun for when I am cold,
Beams of light for when it is dark.
I have a rainbow of all different colors
and feelings,
So if you need a little happiness in your life
Come to my collection at
the
bottom
of
the
sea.

Aimee Bennett, Grade 6

SADNESS

Sadness is a dead flower
lying in the snow;
It is a baby lightning bug
that will not glow;
It is a pond
with no ducks at all;
Or a piece of cake
that is way too small;
Sadness is a bee
with a large, pointy sting;
It is a wedding
with no diamond ring;
It is a Christmas party
with no tree;
Or a beautiful person
who cannot see;
Sadness is a cat
with no fluffy tail;
It is a large, big sea
without a whale;
It is a big, fat kite
that will not fly;
Or no bright wishing star
in the sky.

Durrell Fenwick, Grade 7

FOOTBALL

Football looks and moves like the flash
running to catch the ball;
It smells like grass when you fall;
It sounds like the helmets clanging together;
It tastes like blood when you get hit
and your helmet pops off;
It feels like your hand is being broken
when you hit;
Football is about full contact;
I feel a little scared,
But I have a lot of heart to play a hard sport;
Football is rough. I love it anyway.

Taylor Hough, Grade 6

OBNOXIOUSNESS

Obnoxiousness is like a mosquito:

It smells like sweaty people;
It tastes like stale bread that can't be chewed;
It is like a mosquito whining around you,
buzzing in your ear;
It makes me feel anger inside;
It feels like a mosquito bite itching!
Although it can, like a mosquito, be killed;
Use cooperation and you will slap
the mosquito.

Leonard Cooper, Grade 8

BLACK

Black is the essence of love;
It is the color of a midnight sky;
Black is the color of beauty;
It is the color of warm feelings
    inside a person's heart;
Black is the power of the
    African American race;
The color black means respect, pride,
    and power;
Black is the color of a dark sea in the night;
Black is the color of noise in the city;
It is the color of hard steel;
It is the color of a powerful bee;
Black is the color of ME.

A Brief History of MCTELA

Jennifer L. Klemens
Frostburg State University

This brief history of MCTELA was gleaned by the *MEJ* editorial intern/ historian from the organization's archives—mainly newsletters—from 1974-1991. The author notes that change was the main theme in the organization during those years. This narrative traces the growth of MCTE to MCTELA, changes to the constitution that resulted in reconstruction of the organization itself, and contributions of MCTELA to the teaching profession.

The Maryland Council for Teachers of English (MCTE) was founded in the late 1950s. During the late 1970s, MCTE grew to become The Maryland Council of Teachers of English Language Arts, adopting a new acronym, MCTELA. This expansion was the result of the need for increased membership in an organization which was thought by some to be losing its momentum. Formerly, MCTE business meetings and conferences took place at the same annual meeting. Now, MCTELA holds monthly Executive Board meetings and semiannual conferences. Educators and supervisors at all levels of education—even students—are encouraged to become members of MCTELA, the state affiliate of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE).

Membership in MCTELA opens the doors to improvement in English/ Language Arts educational instruction. MCTELA promotes research, experimentation, and investigation in the teaching of English; offers leadership challenges and opportunities to advance networking; provides members with publications of the *Maryland English Journal* and quarterly newsletters; and conveys the interests/concerns of the English/Language Arts teaching profession to the public.

MCTE Becomes MCTELA

The spring of 1974 saw the publication of MCTE's first newsletter. This newsletter announced the first of a series of MCTE regional meetings to be held in Columbia, Maryland. Members of the Council and non-members were encouraged to attend the meeting and to carpool in order to get there, for there was a serious gas shortage at that time. In fact, members thought they might have to cancel the meeting because of the shortage of gas. In the previous year, MCTE's membership had decreased by nearly 200. In an effort to combat this situation, MCTE attempted to expand its services by holding its next meeting in the western part of the state. By December 1975, the number of MCTE members tallied 438, a slight increase over the previous year. However, a count taken in December of 1976 showed only 326 members.

Jennifer L. Klemens, an English major minoring in philosophy, graduates in May from Frostburg State. She is a member of Sigma Tau Delta and MCTELA, and currently serves as MCTELA historian and as the *MEJ* editorial intern.

The Executive Committee conceived of a plan to increase MCTE membership. The committee was interested in involving classroom teachers from both elementary and secondary levels, as well as providing for a geographic balance between metropolitan and other counties. There was even some talk of revamping the entire construction of MCTE. It would not be long until MCTE became MCTELA because of the involvement of elementary and secondary school teachers. The 1977 spring conference was considered one of the most successful in years, with over 600 people coming together at Towson State College Student Center to hear the Executive Secretary of NCTE, Robert Hogan, give the keynote address. Membership in 1977 increased to 412, with Baltimore City and Baltimore County comprising more than half of that number. However, the following two years saw a decrease in membership—to 330 members in 1979 and only 302 in 1980. In 1980, MCTELA initiated its first "getaway" spring conference at the Sheraton-Fontainebleu in Ocean City, Maryland. More than 150 English teachers traveled from all over the state to attend, making it a resounding success. Spring conferences continued to be held in Ocean City, and the 1983 conference set the precedent of holding conferences at the Carousel Hotel, a tradition followed for years to come. The stability of MCTELA looked optimistic, for MCTELA's 1981 fall conference prompted 50 new members to join.

Changes in the Constitution

MCTELA has seen many changes in its constitution. In 1974, a new constitutional amendment called for background information on each candidate running for a position on the Council to be provided to the membership before the spring elections for Executive Board officers. In 1977, four members-at-large were added to the Executive Committee. These additions were in line with the recent amendment which provided for the selection of one member-at-large for every fifty members in a local subdivision. In connection to the change of MCTE to MCTELA, 1977 also saw an amendment which stated that the nominating committee would consist of six persons representing English teachers at elementary, junior high, senior high, and college levels. This differed from the previous policy statement, which called for "six persons from various geographical areas of the state." In 1978, the constitution was rewritten to clarify the issue of the membership year and terms of office for the Executive Committee. All terms would start January 1 and end December 31. Also, the Executive Committee was expanded to include chairpersons of any standing committees, for example, the Membership committee and the Political Action committee. In 1980, there was a proposal of an amendment to appoint a historian. The historian would preserve and maintain records of the Council's procedures, documents, and other archives and serve a term of three years which could be renewed. Other constitutional amendments proposed between the years of 1981 and 1987 revolved around the removal of Executive officers by a two-thirds vote of the committee, the succession of Executive offices, the appointment of Ad Hoc committees by the president (rather than the Executive Committee), the election of officers by mail voting, and the length of officers' terms.

The Reconstruction of MCTELA

While constitutional amendments illustrate a progressive, yet gradual, change in MCTELA, the mid 1980s confirmed the need for a complete reconstruction of the organization. In 1978, a Reconstructive committee was formed to meet these needs. The goals of this committee were to achieve greater geographical representation and to redesign the organizational structure of the Executive Committee for greater efficiency. The Committee even considered the possibility of a total restructuring of the Council statewide through a series of mini-councils. During the 1983-84 year, the MCTELA Executive Board wondered if it could, or even should, continue to operate. However, in 1984, growthful reconstructive changes ensued. Membership and terms of office were switched from the calendar year to the school year, thereby allowing the organization to be more in step with its profession by centering activities around the school year. The Executive Committee decided to establish a theme for the year in order to promote unity in all activities, and the spring conference would structure presentations around that theme. During this year, MCTELA proposed to computerize its membership to facilitate notification of individuals whose memberships had lapsed, and to keep rolls and mailings up to date. The 1984-85 membership year brought MCTELA back to life. The Board raised dues to promote communications with members; computerized membership rolls using an Apple computer and PFS File; mailed invitations to join to over 500 past members, 200 members of the Maryland Writing Project, English supervisors statewide, and 695 Maryland NCTE members who were not yet members of MCTELA; expanded the Teacher-of-the-Year program to include awards to teachers at the elementary, middle, senior, and higher education levels; gained a new Elementary Representative to run the Elementary Writers' Showcase; expanded the *Journal* to 64 pages and resumed its publication twice yearly; and set up an information exchange with the Virginia Association of Teachers of English. In 1988, a Board of Delegates was established that would meet at least twice a year under the direction of the president. This board would formulate, consider, and vote on resolutions for MCTELA.

MCTELA's Contributions to the Teaching Profession

Through the years, MCTELA has made many contributions to the profession of teaching English/Language Arts in Maryland. Within its own framework, MCTELA encouraged educators to excel by introducing the English-Teacher-of-the-Year-Award in 1974. Coupled with the previously established Distinguished Service Award, the Teacher-of-the-Year-Award offered incentives for educators to perform to the best of their abilities. (Later, in 1985, MCTELA's Teacher-of-the-Year program expanded to offer awards to one teacher at each of the four levels: elementary, middle/junior high, high school, and higher education.) Also in 1974, MCTELA offered its service (along with several agencies, publishing companies, and NCTE) to the Advisory Council on Evaluation of Writing to determine the cost of developing a new writing assessment instrument for the 1975-76 school year. The Council planned to pilot the new writing instrument in Maryland schools. In 1975, MCTELA requested of the Maryland State Teachers Association to be represented on both the task force to preserve academic freedom and the task force on constructive class size. The following year, MCTELA sponsored a Speakers' Bureau as a service to elementary and secondary English teachers in Maryland. The Speakers' Bureau allowed volunteers to share knowledge and experience with other teachers at department meetings, faculty meetings, and small conferences.

MCTELA became concerned with the proposal to create a department of education on the Federal level in 1979. The MCTELA committee for the Support for the Learning and *Teaching of English* (SLATE) continued efforts to make political decisions. With regard to the teaching profession, this committee made phone calls and sent letters to members of legislature over concern about the Pension Reform Bill and the Merit Pay Bill. The committee even contacted Governor Harry Hughes about the need to include state committee members of English Language Arts. This committee requested that all MCTELA members contribute by writing/telephoning so that political decision-makers were aware of their concerns.

In 1980, Project Basic (competency test in grade 7) was implemented in Maryland. The study committee recommended holistic scoring of paragraphs, a study of need for and cost of multiple choice questions, and more field study. The Executive Committee of MCTELA joined with the leadership of other educational groups in addressing the Maryland Commission on Quality Teaching in 1982. The Commission's efforts were directed at public education and considered issues such as teacher recruitment, teacher education program requirements, content and quality of teacher preparatory programs, teacher certification requirements, and the maintenance of a quality staff. MCTELA was honored to host the NCTE 1989 Annual Convention in November of that year. Approximately 600 Maryland MCTELA members were involved with planning local arrangements and participating at the conference itself. The Convention proved to be a great success.

Author's Note

As I familiarized myself with the MCTELA archives in order to write this history of some small, and some not-so-small, highlights of the years, I was struck by the amount of change that this organization has undergone. I saw the initial optimism of MCTELA's first newsletter and the excitement of committee members' correspondence deteriorate into utter desolation in the early 1980s. However, MCTELA overcame low membership and lack of funds, and a resurgence of the original optimism appeared in the writings of its members. MCTELA is once again an optimistic and thriving organization.

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by April 30, 1995. The committee will contact nominees with the details and materials packet to complete the application process.

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